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Gamers' Republic

ONIC ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

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THE ACTION-GAME EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME FROM THE MASTERS AT TREASURE MAY BE THE N64'S BEST GAME EVER

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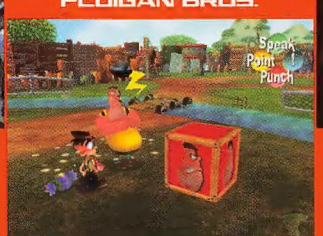
DRIVER 2 · PERSONA 2 · WINBACK PS2 · BLADE · SURF ROCKET · UNREAL TOURNAMENT

METAL GEAR SOLID 2

FLOIGAN BROS.



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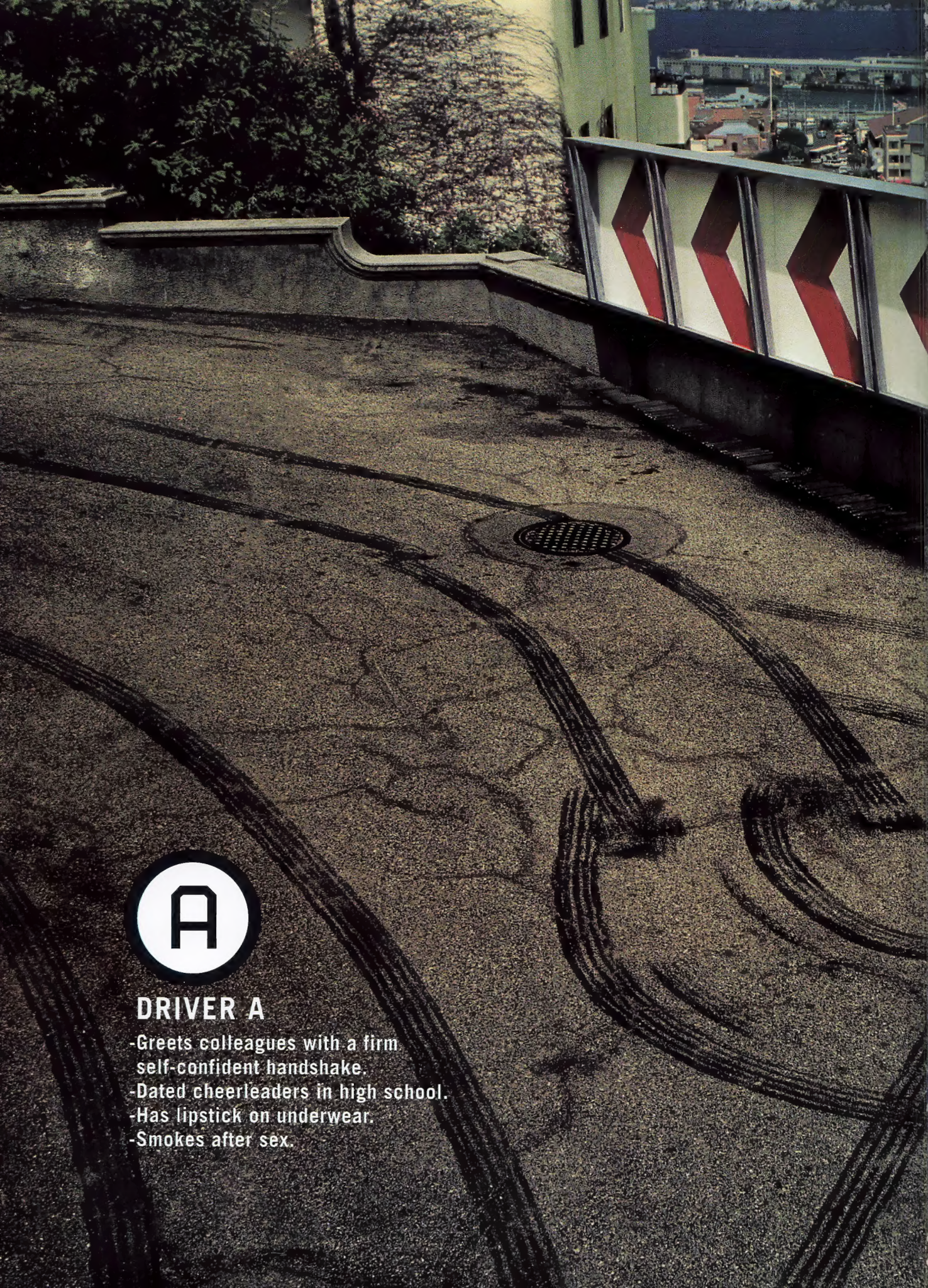
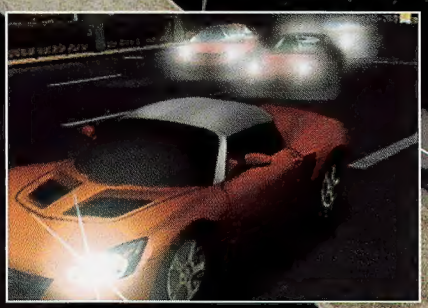

A
DRIVER A
-Greets colleagues with a firm self-confident handshake.
-Dated cheerleaders in high school.
-Has lipstick on underwear.
-Smokes after sex.

MSR
METROPOLIS STREET RACER

Welcome to Metropolis Street Racer where going fast isn't enough, you've gotta go fast and look good. MSR is the only racing game where you're judged on KUDOs (points based on style) as well as speed. MSR also features amazing recreations of real cities. London, Tokyo, and San Francisco, are shown in incredible detail, right down to the street signs and radio stations. So check out Metropolis Street Racer and see if you've got what it takes to maintain an image at 180 mph.



:: SAN FRANCISCO ::

:: LONDON ::

:: TOKYO ::

B

DRIVER B

-Offers a limp and clammy handshake that screams of self doubt.
-Wasn't allowed to date in high school.
-Has superheroes on underwear.
-Apologizes after sex.

Dreamcast

sega.com/msr

EVERYONE
E
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BIZARRE CREATIONS

VOL. 4, NUMBER 7 • ISSUE #32 www.gamersrepublic.com

Gamers' Republic Manifesto

While this issue of Gamers' Republic is on sale throughout this great country of ours, the year 2000 will have quietly melted away. And besides the fact that we can't seem to elect a president, nothing happened! The seas didn't boil, the sky didn't fall. Heck, my computer never even crashed. The Y2K bug must've got liqueured up last New Year's Eve and died in some lonely crack.

The video-game industry, however, was on fire, and projections for the years ahead are staggering. But with this newfound commerce, an old blight has come flying out of the closet and it's one of the most dangerous—poorly conceived, rushed games based on blockbuster movies. The reason these are so potentially dangerous is because they are the most likely candidates to be picked up when mom or dad buys a new system, since the games are based on quality content parents are familiar with. If someone's first impression of the Dreamcast is Grinch or 102 Dalmations...Houston, we have a serious problem. I can remember when Disney games were chiseled to perfection, full of groundbreaking animation, stunning locales and simple yet intriguing gameplay. Aladdin, Jungle Book, Quackshot, Lion King, and Castle of Illusion—to name but a few for the Sega Genesis—were all superb. But the state of The Grinch and 102 Dalmations for Dreamcast most recently have me at a loss for words. With names like Universal (Crash Bandicoot), Konami (Metal Gear Solid), Eidos (Tomb Raider), and Crystal Dynamics (Legacy of Kain) attached, how can these games be so poor and, moreover, how did they get green-lighted? I'm surprised they got by Sega—very surprised. Why do I care enough to risk getting companies I respect angry at me? Because this industry is a big part of my life and yours and it's my job to care. These games should be our best, not embarrassments.

On the other end of the spectrum, Max Steel (Treyarch), based on a Kids WB TV show, is awesome, and Sony's The Emperor's New Groove (Argonaut) for the PlayStation is a great game, so 2000 hasn't been a total cinematic loss. I just think that all of these games, given that they have such huge potential, deserve attention and budgets on par with their big-screen counterparts. Maybe the producers or stars should have a say, if that'll make the difference. Adam Sandler executive produced his Little Nicky game, and it rocked. How sad is it, by the way, that Fox canned the Titan A.E. game, just because the film didn't perform at the box office, which I'm *sure* was due to either poor marketing or just bad timing. The movie is a labor of love and a work of art. If the game was good, I'm sure that gamers' would have come out for it. Oh well.

Enjoy the issue; it's packed with cool stuff. And have a safe and happy New Year. We'll see you back here next month with our second 2001 edition: a very special issue of GR is coming your way!

Gamers' Republic is proud to use monster cable monster game interconnects for all gameplay testing.

Gamers' Republic
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JANUARY 2001

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Number of editors who ralphed into their waste basket during crunch time... alot... loudly-1

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A classic battle of eat or be eaten.

Torneko is hungry. But so are the monsters. With character and monster design by Akira Toriyama, *Torneko: The Last Hope* is an addictive RPG-style adventure with a twist! You'll sweat bullets trying to survive the *Dragon Warrior* monsters coming at you in an ever-changing labyrinth of dungeons. But if you get Torneko his food, you just might make it out alive!

WORLD OF DRAGON WARRIOR

TORNEKO

THE LAST HOPE™

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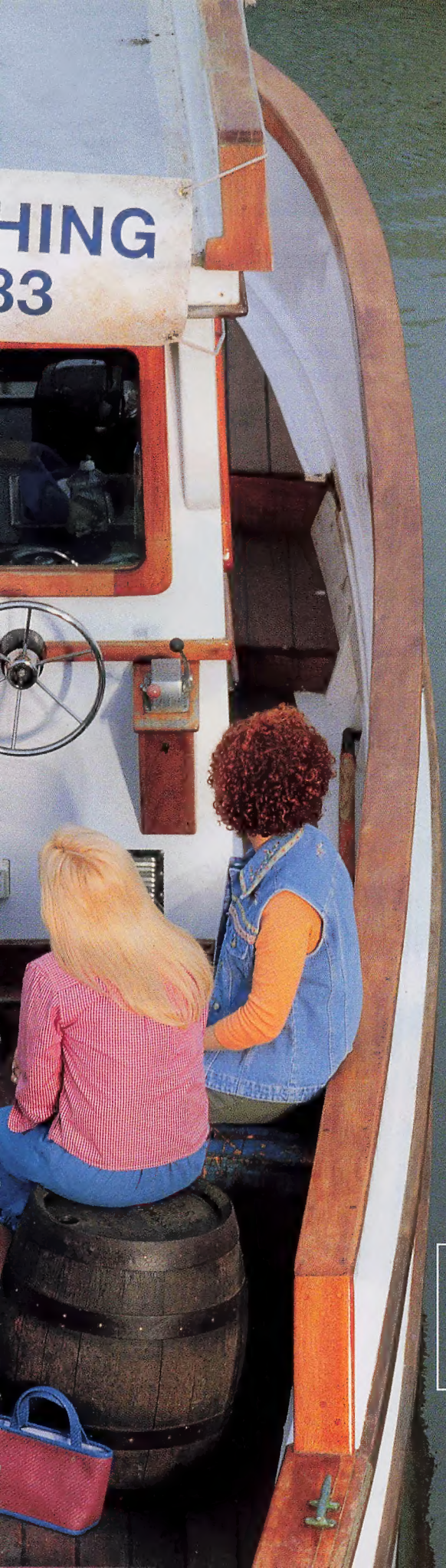

SEGA MARINE FISHING™

Rip some lip.

It's all in the wrist. You should be good at that.

You're the fishin' technician.

Poor Captain Jack. Thanks to Sega Marine Fishing, folks aren't lining up to pay top dollar to not catch fish on his tourist troller. Nope, seems all the smart fishermen are out on the Sega Sea matching wits with Sailfish, Tarpon, Blue Marlin, Tuna and Mako Shark. Any wonder things are a little slow down at the docks?

Dreamcast™

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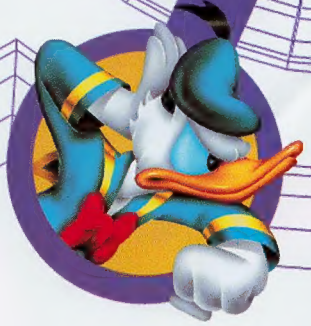
TRANSCONTINENTAL GAMING GUIDE
A MILLENNIUM PROJECT

SIN AND PUNISHMENT .24

Any time a new Treasure game comes around, it's cause for celebration. But this time it was even more special. The best thing to happen to action gaming since the last Treasure game just so happens to breathe new life into the beloved Nintendo 64. We knew we were doing a cover story when we saw the box.



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BANJO-TOOIE .76

Rare's bear and bird are back in one of the most spectacular-looking games ever for the Nintendo 64. If you like your action games with extra puzzle solving and crazy amounts of exploration, you will be in heaven. But if you're looking for some hardcore Rare platforming action though...you'll love it anyway. It's a Rare game.

SKIES OF ARCADIA .60

They've done it again. As they did with 8- and then 16-bit (so they took 32-bit off), Sega has crafted an RPG that has legendary written all over it. Set aside a good 50-60 hours and join Vyse and Aika for a trip through the beautiful skies and amazing lands of Arcadia.

COLOR CODED FOR ACCURACY

MONTHLY GAMING NEWS

FRONTLINES

SEGA BROADENS HORIZONS: PLANS WORLD DOMINATION

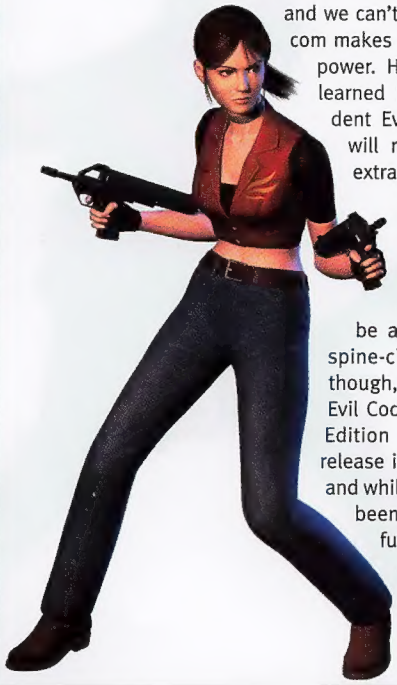
First we fix the ballots in Florida, creating a diversion. Next I've called for three air strikes. Beyond that, I see blue blue skies.

On November 16, Sega held a press conference in Tokyo to formally announce the company's shift in focus away from hardware and toward becoming the biggest software company in the world through network entertainment and software across multiple platforms. Most significant, but not unexpected, was SOJ President Hideki Sato's announcement that Sega will provide content to a number of set top boxes and consumer entertainment devices. Specific hardware manufacturers weren't mentioned, but they will most likely include Xbox, Gamecube and/or PlayStation 2. Sega is also going to provide content to existing platforms such as PCs, mobile phones and handheld PDAs, and Sega will maintain an online network with content for wireless devices and next-generation broadband products. Considering that Sega has already teamed with Motorola to work on cellular phone gaming, and that Sega is at work on a version of Puyo Puyo for Sharp's popular Zaurus PDA, these announcements only seem like a natural extension. Sato also mentioned that they are working to make Dreamcast games compatible with PCs through a DC card and an accompanying driver that lets CD drives read GD ROMS.

In addition, Sato announced the company has started a program of semi-independence of the Software R&D Division and AM Facility Operation Business, which will improve cost management and creative development. Sato said the company has undertaken several restructuring measures, including selling off unused inventory, closing unprofitable amusement facilities, optimizing distribution systems, and integrating overseas subsidiaries, to improve profits. Finally, Sega has implemented changes to its management structure and will announce new outside advisors (such as Tetsu Kayama from Marigul Management, who realized the Game Boy version of Sakura Wars) who will sit on its board. After Sega of Japan's announcement, we had a chance to talk with SOA President Peter Moore, and we asked about Sega's new strategy. "I've just heard about it [multi-platform strategy] only a couple of hours ago," said Moore. "SOA's strategy might differ. I don't know?!"

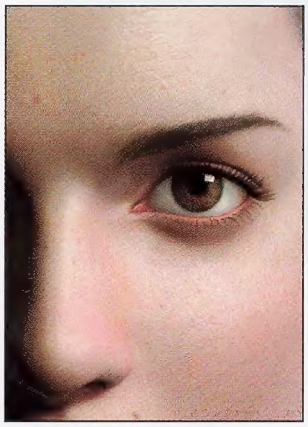
EVIL NEVER DIES

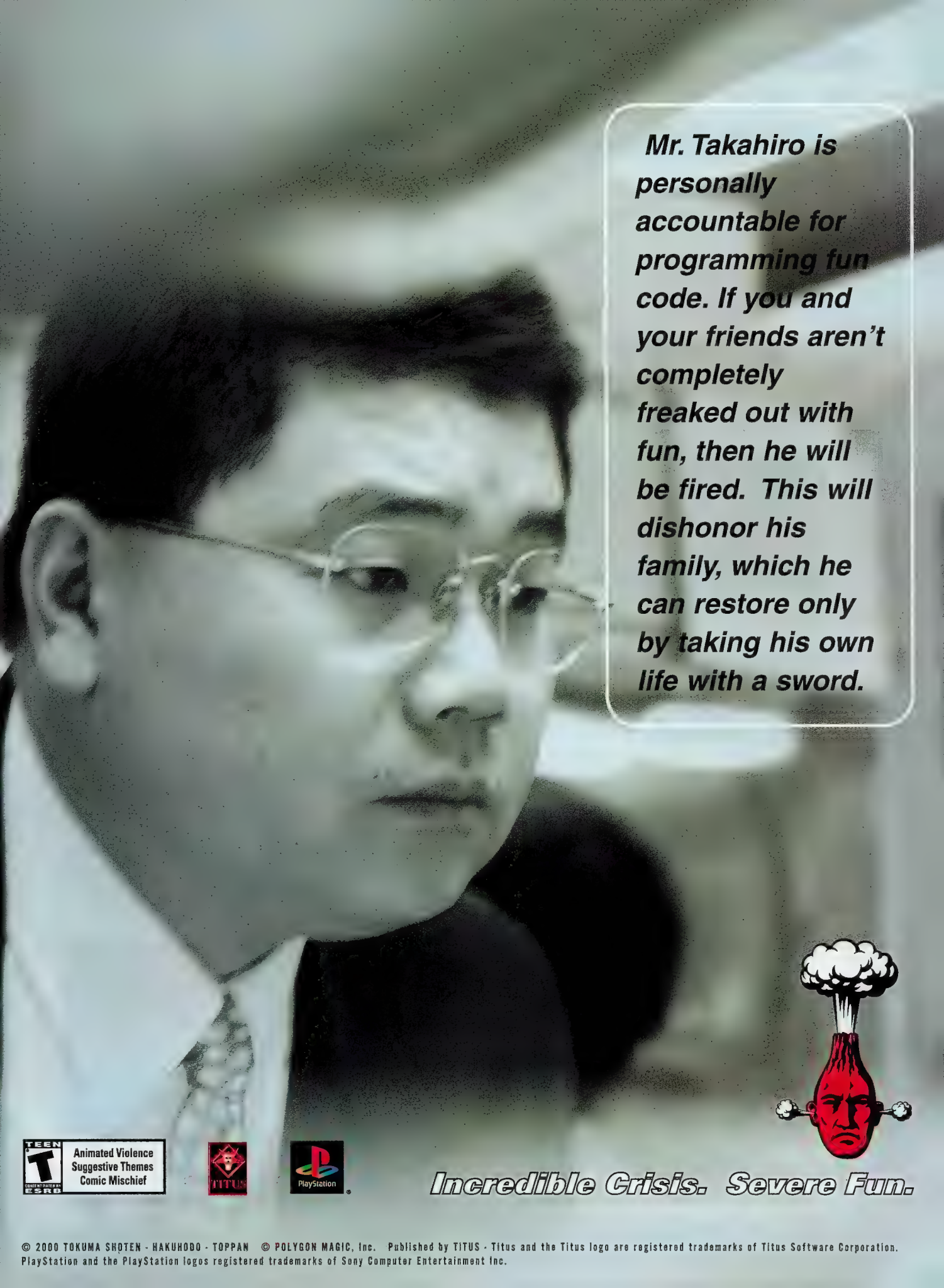
The horror isn't going to end any time soon if Capcom has anything to say about it. In November, Capcom announced that they will be bringing out an enhanced version of one of the best Dreamcast games ever: Resident Evil Code: Veronica. Coming to DC and PlayStation 2, the new version will be called Resident Evil Code: Veronica Complete Edition, and we can't wait to see how Capcom makes use of the added PS2 power. Hopefully Capcom has learned its lesson from Resident Evil: Director's Cut and will remember to put the extra goodies in this time, but they haven't even hinted at what exactly will make the game Complete. A full first-person mode would be a nice addition to the spine-chilling adventure though, wouldn't it? Resident Evil Code: Veronica Complete Edition is scheduled for release in Japan in early 2001, and while a U.S. release hasn't been announced yet, we fully expect an official confirmation in the coming weeks.



A NEW BREED OF CINEMA

Thirty-one stories above the endless glistening blue of the Pacific Ocean, the view in Square Pictures' Honolulu studio became even more extraordinary as black curtains crawled down the windows, a large video screen unfolded in the front of the room, and the first teaser trailer for *Final Fantasy: The Spirit Within* cut through the darkness. This was the first time the press were given the chance to view the short rapid-fire footage, and after a moment of silence, about the only thing we could say was, "Please, one more time!" Square was kind enough to oblige, but had we gotten our way, another ten viewings would have been in order. Enthusiasm boiling over, the only sensible thing to do was catch the trailer again on film before Arnold Schwarzenegger's *The Sixth Day*. It will also be running before *The Grinch* and *Vertical Limit*, and you can watch it on the web at www.finalfantasythemovie.com. See for yourself the result of the next level of CG filmmaking. And then check out next month's Gamers' Republic for a look into the making of the movie.




Mr. Takahiro is personally accountable for programming fun code. If you and your friends aren't completely freaked out with fun, then he will be fired. This will dishonor his family, which he can restore only by taking his own life with a sword.
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Animated Violence
Suggestive Themes
Comic Mischief
ESRB
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PlayStation
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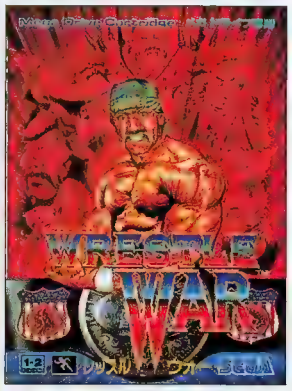
SMASH PACK - GIMME!

The best games never die; they just get better with age. And Sega knows it. Sega announced they will release a new Dreamcast bundle this January that includes 10 all-time classic games from the Sega Genesis, plus the puzzle game Sega Swirl and Virtua Cop 2 (which was previously available for DC only in Japan) for a total of 12 games. Called the "Smash Pack," and priced at $179.99, the bundle cuts across all genres and includes the following games: the original Sonic the Hedgehog; the classic medieval hack 'n' slash co-op game Golden Axe, Altered Beast, where you play a shape-shifter resurrected by Zeus to save his daughter; Vectorman, a pre-rendered action shooter; Columns, Sega's answer to Tetris; Revenge of Shinobi, the brilliant ninja action game with an awesome soundtrack; Phantasy Star II, considered by many to be the best in the series; Shining Force, the hit strategy-RPG; Wrestle War, which was never released before on console in the U.S.; and one of the best beat-'em-up titles ever, Streets of Rage 2. Hopefully this means more classic games will be available to Dreamcast users in the future, perhaps for download over the Internet. In fact, Sonic Team has revealed that a Sonic collection will be released on DC in 2001 to commemorate Sonic's 10-year anniversary, though the titles on the collection haven't been announced.



THE BIGGER THEY ARE...

It's no secret that Acclaim's been in financial trouble for some time, having been nearly bumped from the NASDAQ, losing the Ferrari license and being in repeated danger of bankruptcy. Now we know just how bad the situation is, as Acclaim revealed in its latest financial report that it lost $131.7 million in the 2000 fiscal year, which ended Aug. 31. Very ouch. Acclaim blames the losses on a transition to more advanced systems and also on its unprofitable print ventures. As a result, Acclaim will shut down its comic book division, but will continue to publish strategy guides. Nonetheless,

Acclaim® entertainment, inc.

Acclaim still has quite a lineup planned for 2001 which it hopes will turn its fortunes around, including Dave Mirra Platinum Edition for PS, All-Star Baseball, NFL Quarterback Club, ShadowMan: The Second Coming, and a new Max Sports title for PS2. Forty-three games are planned in all in 2001, specifically 12 for PS2, 12 for PS1, four PC titles, five Dreamcast titles, seven for the Game Boy Color, and three titles for Game Boy Advance. Our sources tell us that an enhanced Fur Fighters is one of the PS2 titles, which should make us all happy.

INFOGRAMES HAS BALLZ

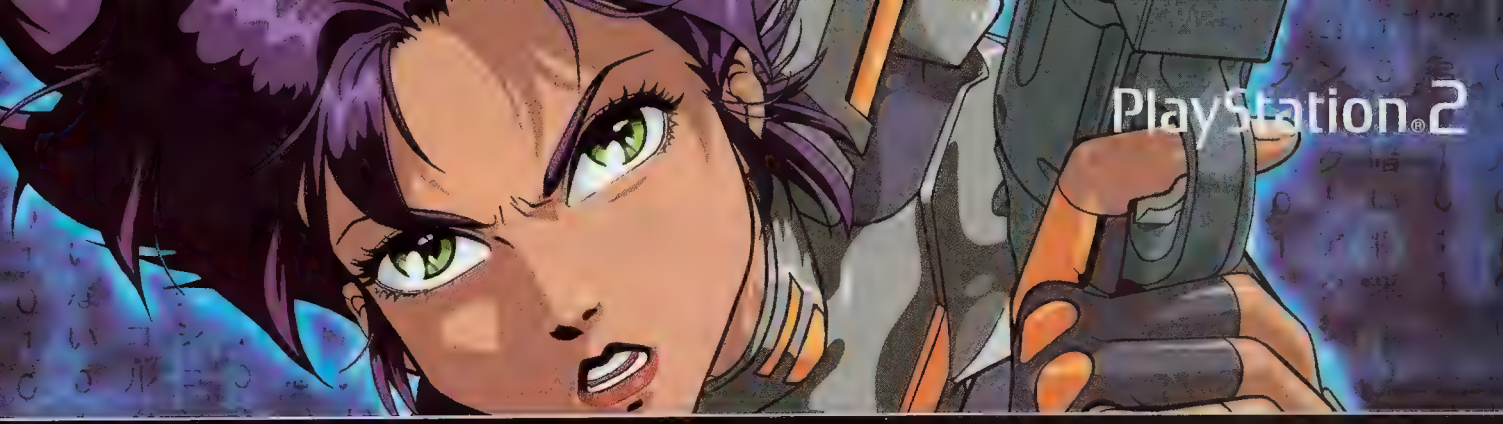
One of the most popular anime series in the U.S., Dragon Ball Z, will be returning to consoles courtesy of Infogrames. Although details haven't been announced, the games will spread across multiple platforms and pack all the fighting action and characters that viewers have come to know and love. Considering how scarce and sought-after the older DBZ games are, Infogrames has a veritable goldmine on its hands if the games are handled properly.

3DO @ FAO

Showing off a slew of products slated for 2001, 3DO transformed the FAO Schwartz toy store in downtown San Francisco into a video game wonderland. The three-floor establishment held a dozen games from 3DO, complete with designers and producers to explain the vision of each title. All of the established franchises like Army Men, Sammy Sosa, and Might and Magic were all running on PS2 hardware. New franchises were also uncovered: the WDL (World Destruction League) will continue to encapsulate the BattleTanx games and will be joined by WarJetz, among others. Another new franchise is Portal Runner and to help induce excitement, 1999 Playboy Playmate of the year, Miss Heather Kozar, was dolled up as lead character Vikki Grimm. The night ended with a mini-shopping spree where we snatched up some cool Christmas items compliments of 3DO.

MAKE MY MILLENNIUM

More than just the usual re-released software, Squaresoft's latest Millennium Collection (we love that name) hit Japan late in November. Truly collectible, these amazing boxed deluxe editions included Chrono Cross (with desk calendar and figurine), Parasite Eve II (with perfume bottle, plastic cover and photo card), and two versions of Xenogears (one with figures of Bart and Fei, the other with Elly and Chuchu). Will we ever see something like this in the U.S.? Working Designs take note.



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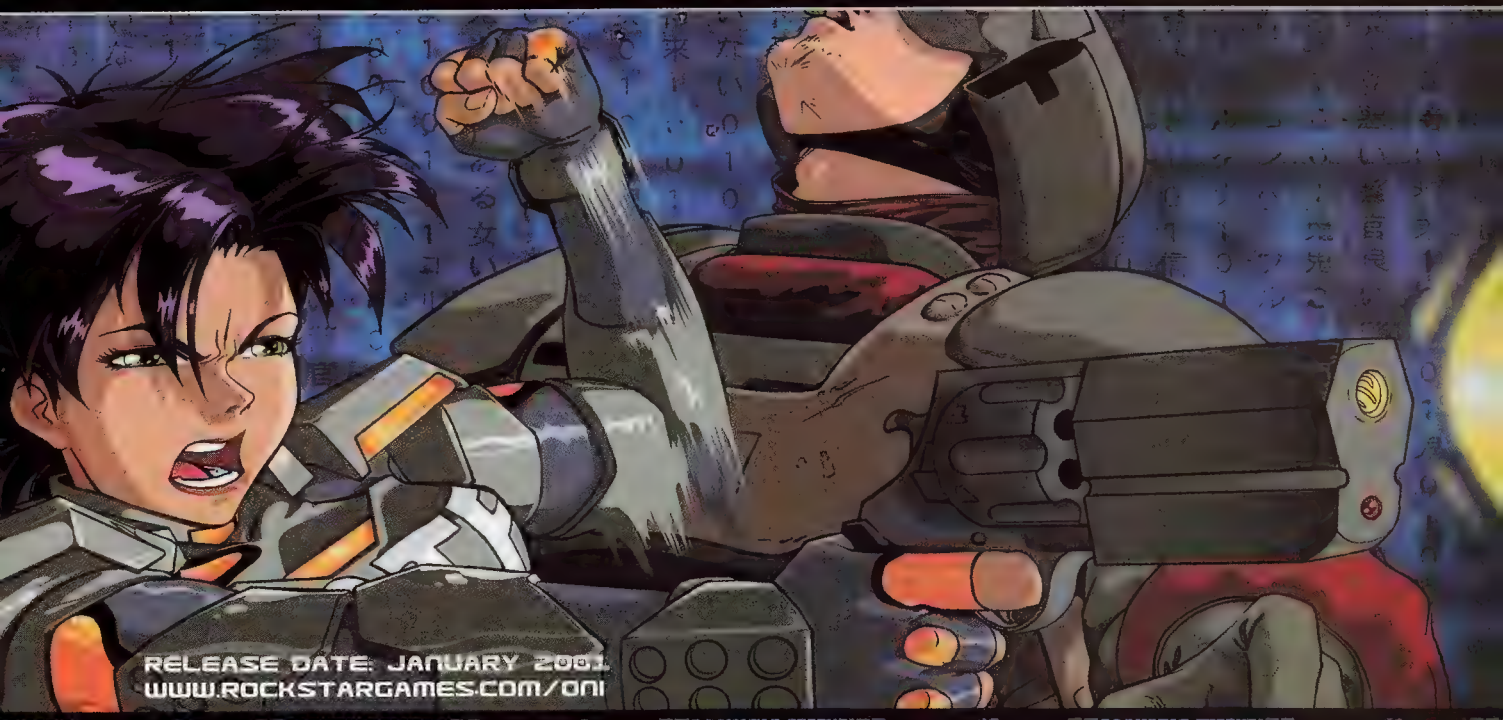

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 2001
WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/ONI

COMING SOON: THE ONI COMIC BOOK FROM DARK HORSE COMICS

Mac PC CD ROM GAMING BUNGIE

TEEN T Animated Violence

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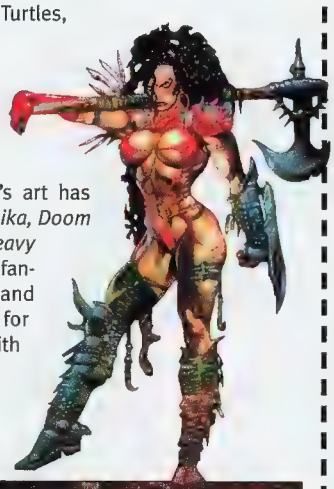
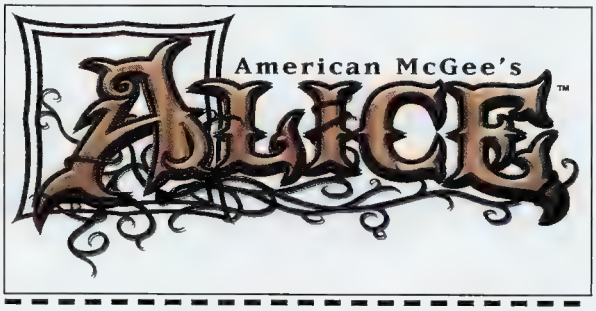
CAPCOM GETS HEAVY

Heavy Metal publisher Kevin Eastman spent some time recently in a Hotel in Nagoya Japan. So what was the publisher of Heavy Metal doing in Japan? Well, he was not alone. Kevin was travelling to Capcom with none other than the legendary Simon Bisley to discuss designing a fighting game! If ever there was a marriage made in heaven (or would it be hell in this case?) this is it. If this happens, expect to see big axes, lots of teets, and maybe just a wee bit of blood. Kevin Eastman created the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, bought *Heavy Metal Magazine*, married Julie Strain and most recently got the animated feature Heavy Metal 2000 made, starring wife Julie and sci-fi veteran Micheal Ironside. So this guy is on a roll. Simon Bisley's art has graced the covers of *Lobo, Satanika, Doom Patrol, Malibu Comics Tarzan, Heavy Metal* and many, many more. His fantasy style is unmistakable and unparalleled—except maybe for Frazetta in America. Together with Capcom—this is gonna be good!



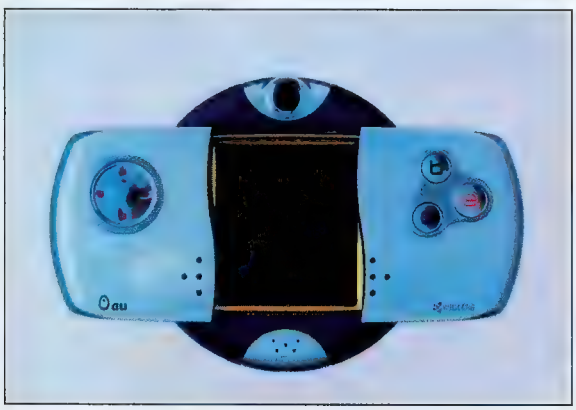
MANSON OUT–VRENNA IN

Former drummer from Nine Inch Nails, Chris Vrenna, has been enlisted to score American McGee's Alice for Electronic Arts. Using a wide collection of children's play toys and instruments to create the eerie and ambient sounds, Chris is fashioning a video game score like no other. But Chris wasn't the team's first choice to provide music. Marilyn Manson was originally drafted, but ultimately erased from the project.

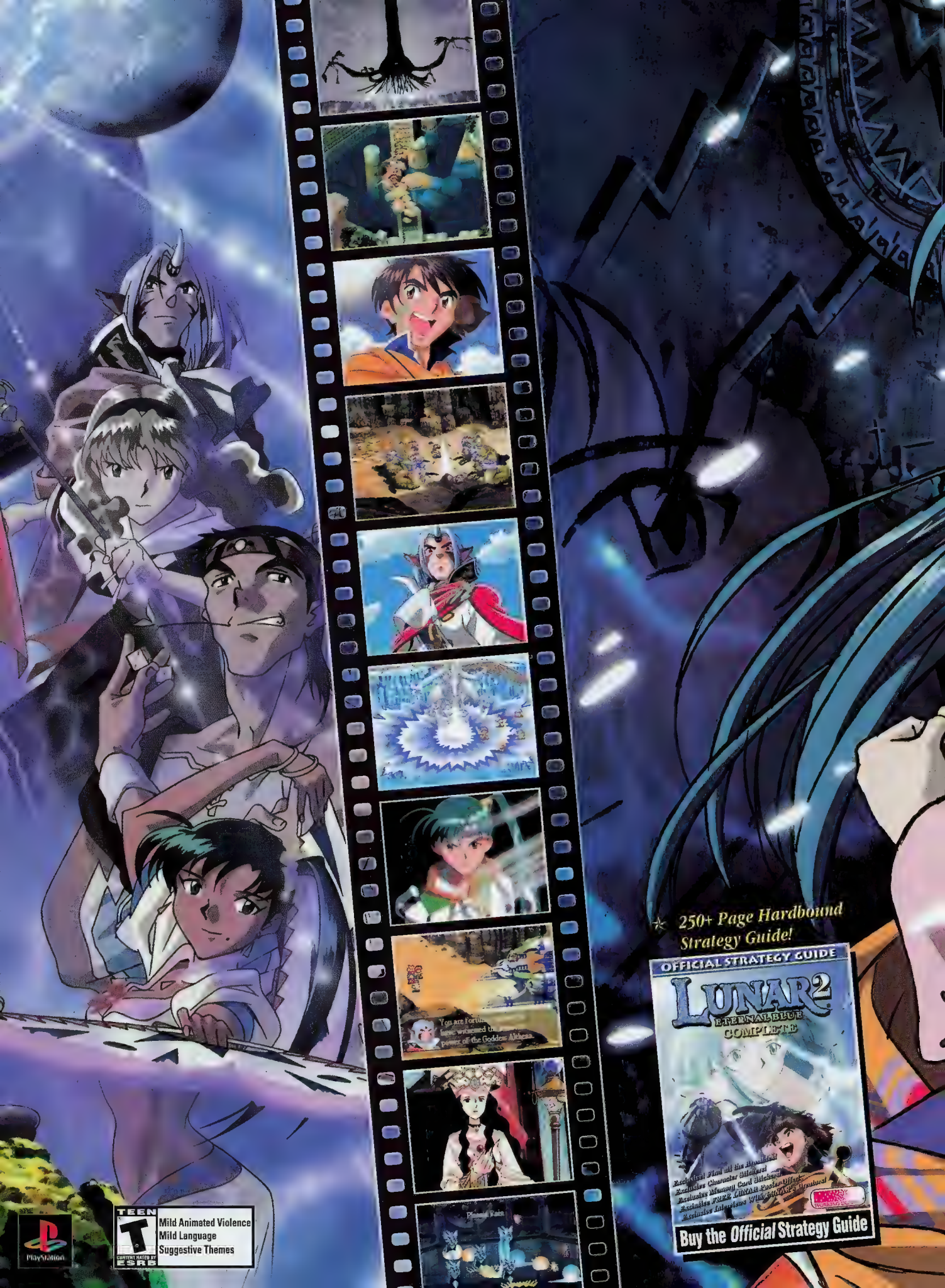


HERE KDDI... WAIT, HUH?

CEATEC Japan was held October 3-7, and KDDI, the second-largest telecommunication company in Japan, displayed a mock-up of a brand-new handheld gaming machine. Though KDDI billed it as a next-generation cell phone, the working name of the gadget was High Performance Game Machine. The 10-centimeter-wide machine is equipped with an LCD screen that is revealed when you slide over the control cross and buttons, making the unit just a little bit bigger than the Neo Geo Pocket. There is also a CCD camera on the top that will let players see their opponent's face while competing in network play. KDDI stated that this is a concept model mockup, so that the actual product may differ. KDDI also stated that the earliest time of release will be fall 2002. The reason for this lengthy wait is to establish a cellular system for downloading quality games. Currently in Japan, cell phone carrier NTT Docomo provides small games (sort of like VMU games), but their download speed is only 9.6KBPS, so that it is impossible to download advanced games on par with Game Boy. From year 2002, all cellular phone carriers will shift to next generation cell phone systems such as W-CDMA (Europe and Japan) and CDMA2000 (America and Asia). These next cellular phones will have a maximum 2MBPS transfer rate so that quality games can be downloaded within a minute. However, KDDI has not decided whether all contents should be downloaded or if they'll be packaged. Though many things are undecided about the High Performance Game Machine, many Japanese game companies have expressed interest in it.



In The Darkest Hour,
Hope Springs Eternal.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Mild Language
Suggestive Themes
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PlayStation

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MY PDA CAN TALK TO MY PC, MY TV...WAFFLE IRON...

Get out of my way, or I will kill you.

Comdex, one of the nation's largest computer shows, was held once again in the beautiful (yeah right) Las Vegas Convention Center this past November. Comdex had become more of a show for e-business rather than hardware retailers, but this year the focus shifted again away from the nonsense of everything "e" (sayonora investor capital) over to the wonderful world of wireless communications, the next technological wonder.

There was a huge amount of product on display as various manufactures rolled out PDAs and more related accessories than you can shake a frequency at. Not only were the Palm and Handspring booths extremely crowded, but booths for PDA newcomers like Sony and Microsoft were also standing-room only, as show goers clamored for all manner of items that will inevitably connect the world's machines, thusly bringing about the chain of events that will lead to the end of the world, Matrix style. Third-party expansion modules were out in force, too, such as the Visor phone—a module that makes Handspring's Visor into a GSM cell phone. Great. Even more pedestrians on phones.

PDA manufacturers have come up with all sorts of wireless solutions, so many in fact that consumers will ultimately be so confused they'll all buy dial phones again. Seriously, can we nail down a standard here, people? One standard, which is expected to revolutionize wireless, is Bluetooth, a computing and telecommunications solution for the masses. Bet the farm on these guys, kids; Ericsson and a host of others are.

Bluetooth enables users to easily interconnect mobile phones, computers, home appliances and PDAs to each other using a short-range frequency of 2.45GHz. With this technology, users of cellular phones, PDAs, or portable audio devices will be able to quickly synchronize with a desktop or notebook computer, and send and receive faxes and music. In short, the technology enables us to link mobile and fixed computer devices seamlessly. In addition to data, up to three-voice channels are available in the Bluetooth specification. Each device has a unique 48-bit address based on IEEE802 standard (got that?), and the connection can be point-to point or multipoint with a maximum range of 33 feet. Data can be exchanged at a rate of 1Mbps. What makes Bluetooth desirable is that the frequency scheme allows devices to communicate even in areas with a great deal of electromagnetic interference. Nifty. Of course, as with all new technology expect all the bugs to be worked out and prices to come down over the next 2-5 years. Enjoy humanity until then, people.

Toshiba's was one of the most popular booths at this year's Comdex. Not only were there appliances using Bluetooth and SD cards, but Toshiba also showed off their next-generation Lithium Ion batteries.

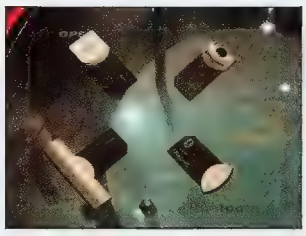
The Memory Stick Duo is a unique product that comes with a microphone, camera and earphone. The body is flexible so it can be worn around your arm.

This Bluetooth mobile cell phone and headset is one of a kind. It can hook to a PC, you can listen to music, and also make and receive phone calls right before the car hits you.

A Bluetooth digital camera. After capturing images, it sends image data to the other appliances with single button action.

Sony's Aibo was welcomed by visitors who could never afford one. Scores of people flocked around the booth to get these artificial dogs to do a trick a two.

The Sanyo cell phone was the best on display. By sliding the top up, an organic electroluminescent screen appears and you can engage in TV conferencing. Other functions include MP3 playback, GPS, and Bluetooth compatibility.



Conceptual SD card appliances. Top right—an SD card electronic book browser. It comes with two 14-inch high-res panels, and it can be used as a browser and PC display.

Bluetooth remote controller with channel preview function. I rule!

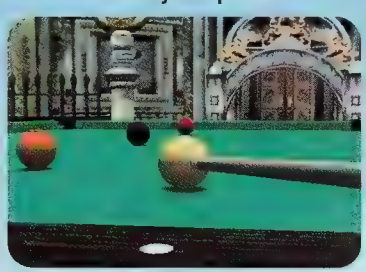
PlayStation.2

Q-Ball

BILLIARDS MASTER

Play alone or with a friend

Master the techniques used by the pros!



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database

YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND COMPUTER GAME STATISTICS

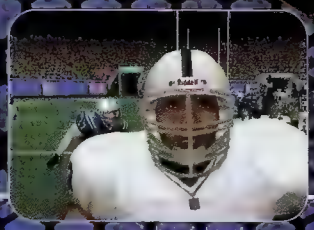
MONTHLY CHARTS PROVIDED BY NPD DATA TRACKING SERVICES

NPD THE NPD GROUP, INC

top ten selling playstation 2 titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF NOVEMBER 5-11, 2000

1. MADDEN NFL 2001	EA	6. SUMMONER	THQ
2. TEKKEN TAG TOUR.	NAMCO	7. READY2RUMBLE 2	MIDWAY
3. NASCAR 2001	EA	8. DEAD OR ALIVE 2	TECMO
4. SSX	EA	9. TIMESPLITTERS	EIDOS
5. NHL 2001	EA	10. DYNASTY WARRIOR 2	KOEI



top ten selling playstation titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF NOVEMBER 5-11, 2000

1. T. HAWK PRO SKATER 2	ACTIVISION	6. SPRYO: Y.O.D	SONY
2. MADDEN NFL 2001	EA	7. GRAN TURISMO 2	SONY
3. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION	8. DAVE MIRRA BMX	ACCLAIM
4. NBA LIVE 2001	EA	9. DRIVER	GT INTERACTIVE
5. MEDAL OF HONOR UG	EA	10. TEKKEN 3	NAMCO

top ten selling nintendo64 titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF NOVEMBER 5-11, 2000

1. ZELDA MM	NINTENDO	6. MADDEN NFL 2001	EA
2. T.W.I.N.E.	EA	7. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION
3. HEY YOU PIKACHU!	NINTENDO	8. SW EPISODE 1 RACER	NINTENDO
4. MARIO TENNIS	NINTENDO	9. SW ROGUE SQUADRON	NINTENDO
5. TARZAN	ACTIVISION	10. NFL BLITZ 2001	MIDWAY

top ten selling dreamcast titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF NOVEMBER 5-11, 2000

1. SHENMUE	SEGA	6. READY2RUMBLE 2	MIDWAY
2. NBA 2K1	SEGA	7. JET GRIND RADIO	SEGA
3. T. HAWK PRO SKATER 2	ACTIVISION	8. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	CRAVE
4. NFL 2K1	SEGA	9. QUAKE III	SEGA
5. CRAZY TAXI	SEGA	10. SONIC ADVENTURE	SEGA

top ten selling gameboy color titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF NOVEMBER 5-11, 2000

1. POKÉMON SILVER	NINTENDO	6. WARIO LAND 3	NINTENDO
2. POKÉMON GOLD	NINTENDO	7. POKÉMON BLUE	NINTENDO
3. POKÉMON YELLOW	NINTENDO	8. T.HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION
4. SUPER MARIO DLX.	NINTENDO	9. POKÉMON PINBALL	NINTENDO
5. POKÉMON RED	NINTENDO	10. FROGGER 2	HASBRO

top ten selling overall console titles

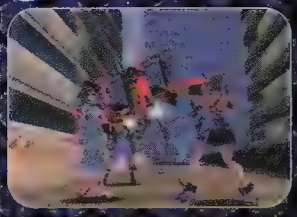
*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF NOVEMBER 5-11, 2000

1. SHENMUE-DC	SEGA	6. T.HAWK PRO SKATER 2-DC	ACTIVISION
2. POKEMON SILVER-N64	NINTENDO	7. T.HAWK PRO SKATER 2-PS	ACTIVISION
3. POKEMON GOLD-N64	NINTENDO	8. T.W.I.N.E.-N64	EA
4. ZELDA MM-N64	NINTENDO	9. MADDEN NFL 2001-PS2	EA
5. NBA 2K1-DC	SEGA	10. MADDEN NFL 2001-PS	EA

gamers' republic top ten games

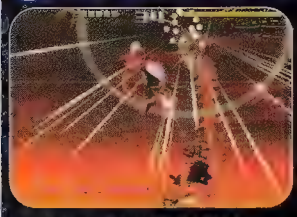
* BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH NOVEMBER 31, 2000

d halverson



1. SIN & PUNISHMENT	N64
2. JET GRIND RADIO	DC
3. SKIES OF ARCADIA	DC
4. MAX STEEL	DC
5. MOTO GP	PS2
6. FIST OF THE NORTHSTAR	PS
7. EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE	PS
8. GRANDIA 2	DC
9. GOIN' QUACKERS	PS2
10. SILPHEED: TLP	PS2

b siechter



1. SIN & PUNISHMENT	N64
2. TR: CHRONICLES	PS
3. SF III: 3rd Strike	DC
4. JET GRIND RADIO	DC
5. RESIDENT EVIL 3	DC
6. SKIES OF ARCADIA	DC
7. NBA 2K1	DC
8. MARIO TENNIS	N64
9. UNREAL	DC
10. RED DOG	DC

mike hobbs

1. SIN & PUNISHMENT	N64
2. FINAL FANTASY IX	PS
3. FIFA 2001	PS2
4. KURI KURI MIX	PS2
5. ZELDA: MM	N64
6. MARIO TENNIS GB	GB
7. MARS MATRIX	DC
8. CANNON SPIKE	DC
9. SILPHEED: TLP	PS2
10. BEATMANIA DX	PS2

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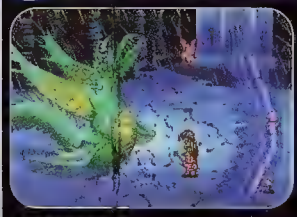
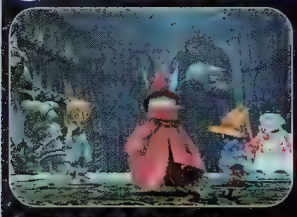


1. LUNAR 2	PS
2. SIN & PUNISHMENT	N64
3. SAMBA DE AMIGO	DC
4. WWF NO MERCY	N64
5. FINAL FANTASY IX	PS
6. GRANDIA 2	DC
7. JET GRIND RADIO	DC
8. PS ONLINE	DC
9. WWF SMACKDOWN! 2	PS
10. GUNGRIFFON BLAZE	PS2

pooch

1. FIFA 2001	PS2
2. MADDEN 2001	PS2
3. NFL 2K1	DC
4. SEGA MARINE FISHING	DC
5. XTREME SPORTS	DC
6. NBA LIVE 2001	PS2
7. JET GRIND RADIO	DC
8. Q-BALL BILLIARDS	PS2
9. P.S.P.B. VOLLEYBALL	PS
10. POKEMON SILVER	GBC

nelson lui

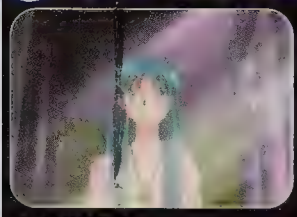


1. FINAL FANTASY IX	PS
2. WWF NO MERCY	N64
3. UNREAL TOURNAMENT	PC
4. CAPCOM VS. SNK	DC
5. FIFA 2001	PC/PS2
6. JET GRIND RADIO	DC
7. CC SAKURA SNAP	DC
8. NBA 2K1	DC
9. HALF-LIFE CS	PC
10. C&C: RED ALERT 2	PC

bob elmquist

1. HALF-LIFE	PC
2. MOTO GP	PS2
3. FINAL FANTASY IX	PS
4. N.O.L.F.	PC
5. SSX SNOWBOARDING	PS2
6. TIMESPLITTERS	PS2
7. PERFECT DARK	N64
8. SKIES OF ARCADIA	DC
9. READY2RUMBLE	PS2
10. QUAKE III	DC

c hossman



1. LUNAR 2	PS
2. WWF NO MERCY	N64
3. SIN & PUNISHMENT	N64
4. FINAL FANTASY IX	PS
5. ZELDA: MM	N64
6. PERSONA 2	PS
7. DK COUNTRY	GBC
8. CAPCOM VS. SNK	DC
9. ROCKMAN X	GBC
10. GRADIUS III&IV	PS2

TECHFRONT

BY MIKE HOBBS

Watching DVDs on the PS2 is quite a novel thing, and it's probably a number of gamers' first exposure to this superior audio/video format. As such, there may be some confusion over just what the PS2 is capable of in the sound department, and what equipment is needed to wring the maximum benefits from its unprecedented sound spec.

All modern DVDs, and a vast majority of the rest, include six channel surround sound, or what is commonly reffered to as "5.1." The five represents the separate channels: front left, center, front right, surround left, and surround right. The sixth channel, or the ".1," is the LFE (Low Frequency Effects) signal, responsible for the bass information, reproduced in a complete setup by a subwoofer. There are two 5.1 surround formats supported by the PS2: Dolby Digital and DTS. Dolby Digital is by far the more prevalent standard, but a number of movies are also including both standards, with DTS sounding just a shade better.

However, it must be noted that the PS2 does not internally decode either signal. Instead, the raw data must be sent via the optical connection to a receiver or digital decoder that supports DTS and/or Dolby Digital. Digital receivers have dropped dramatically in price over the last couple of years, and you can now get a very well equipped unit (complete with S-Video switching) for around $300. Step up the ladder a bit to the $800 range, and you can even find receivers that boast component video switching.

Nearly every modern surround receiver will have an optical input as shown on the left. The two RCA digital inputs to the left of the optical are known as coaxial or electrical, and the PS2 does not support these. On the right, a peek inside the PS2's optical output.

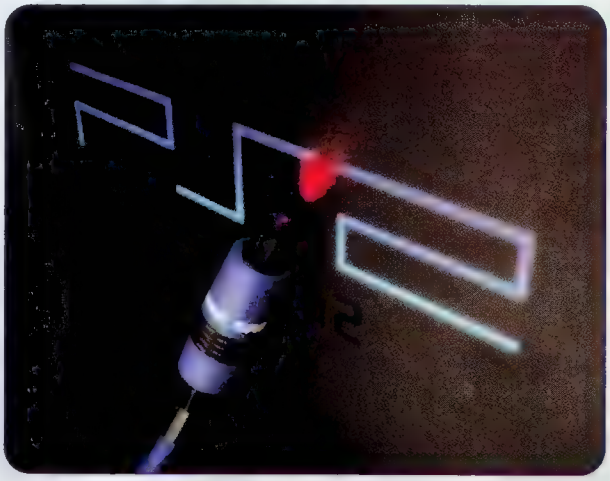
If all this is sounding a little bit expensive, well, that's currently unavoidable. Six speakers and a multichannel receiver is never going to come cheaply with any semblance of quality. About as low as one can go is around $400 for an inexpensive receiver/speaker pack that includes small satelite speakers and a powered sub. Now, you will never get sound as good from a speaker package as you will from carefully selected separate components, but you will at least be able to enjoy a dramatic surround effect from such a system.

Of course, this is relevant only if you are very keen on hearing six channel movie soundtracks. Thus far, no game has had a discrete 5.1 channel sound mix, but it's not impossible, and it's certainly possible to have such a thing during DVD-based MPEG 2 cinema sequences. For the time being, however, the promise of 5.1 is relegated to movies.

But what of those poor old red and white RCA connectors forever tethered to the video leads of the PS2? Well, they do have a use. First of all, this is how most will be connecting their systems directly to their televisions for straight two-channel sound. And even this way, there is a huge increase in sound quality over VHS for movie watching. But for owners of older Dolby Pro-Logic receivers, the RCA leads carry three channel surround information (front left, front right, mono surround), and a number of games do support this format, and you will hear surround information from films as well. Admittedly, it's not as detailed nor does it have anywhere near the dynamic range of Dolby Digital or DTS, but it is a viable solution where cost is an issue.

But let's say you go hog wild and purchase a complete six-channel sound system. The next step is perhaps the most crucial of all: speaker placement. There are many factors that can affect this, such as the shape of the room and the available space, but general guidelines should try to be followed.

Let's begin with the front channels. The left and right speakers should be spaced at least six feet apart and six feet from the listening position, basically forming a triangle. And for optimum stereo imaging, the front left and right speakers should be toed-in towards the listening position so that they are more or less pointed at you. And height is a factor here, as the tweeter (in two-way speakers) should be roughly at ear level. The center channel should be placed either directly above or below your television, as this is where the majority of a film's dialogue is sent. Just make sure that the speaker you are using is magnetically shielded or it may distort the image. The surround speakers should be placed behind you, ideally the same distance from you as the front speakers. When this isn't possible, all surround receivers will allow you to increase the delay in the surround information, acoustically placing the speakers further back than they really are. As for positioning, they should again be pointed at the listening position, though some surround speakers have a diffuse design, meaning they throw sound out in every direction, and these should be placed behind and parallel to the listening position. Subwoofer placement is less critical, as the low frequency information is omnidirectional and it's basically impossible to pinpoint its source. As a simple rule, you can place it anywhere between you and the front speakers. But as with any audio set up, experimentation is the key to ultimate happiness, so be prepared to move things around a bit while you find the optimal surround effect and soundstaging. But once you do, you'll hear movies and games in a completely new light. GR



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- Gamer's Republic, Sept 2000

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- Next Generation, June 2000

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TEEN T Animated Violence

SIN AND PUNISHMENT

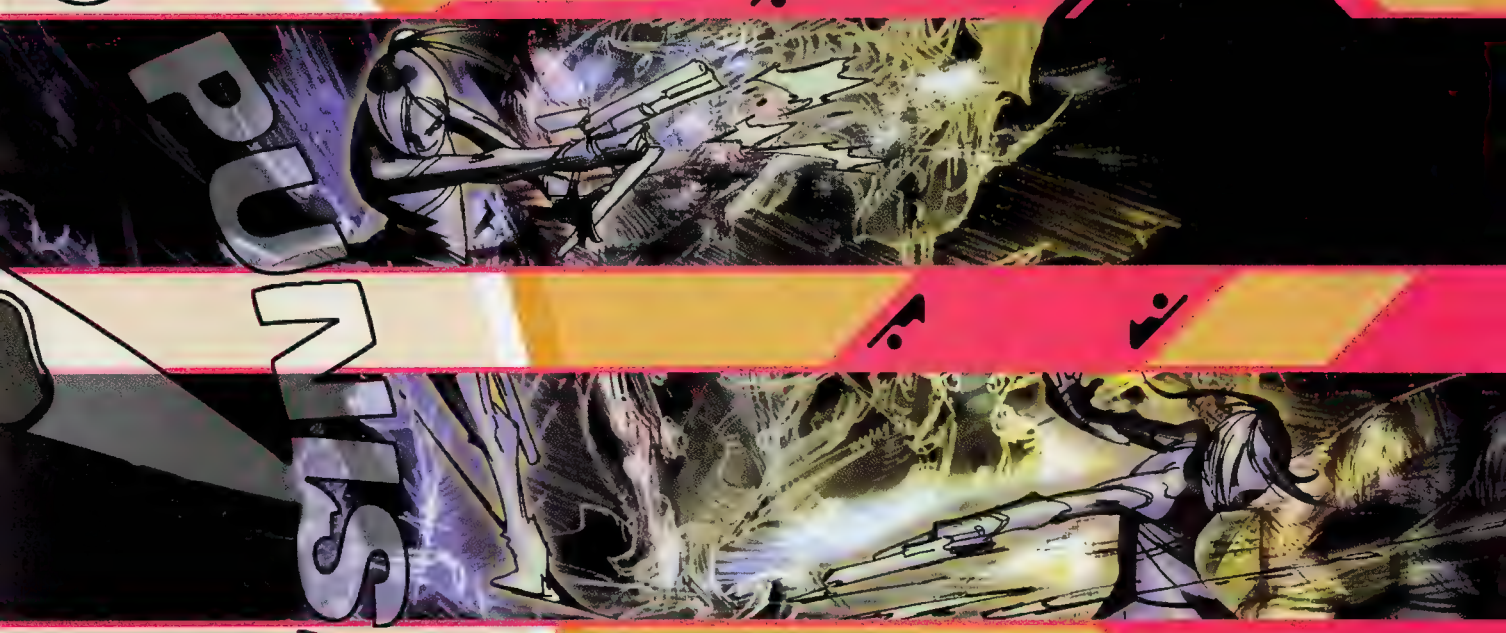
BY DAVE HALVERSON

As Treasure games often do, their latest, Sin and Punishment, seemed to come out of nowhere. After its low-key debut at the Tokyo Game Show in late September, I was inserting Treasure's second U.S.-bound N64 game into my trusty Nintendo 64 by mid-November.

Judging by what we'd seen in Japan and the few screens that followed, Sin and Punishment appeared to be something of a Panzer Dragoon- or Space Harrier-type shooter. But as it turns out, the game really doesn't fit into any stereotype. Treasure has broken the mold once again and created a game that does so many things right on so many levels that besides the fact it's on rails, it bears no comparison to other games. The company's third game for the last cartridge-based system there will probably ever be is simply a masterpiece—another timeless treasure from the company that has made innovation their calling card.

Treasure currently holds the best track record in all of gaming. While still working under the auspices of Konami, they produced Contra Spirits and Axelay (among others), arguably the best action game and shooter for the SNES. Next, the sequel- weary team broke free, formed Treasure, and soon after, their first title to hit the U.S. for the Sega Genesis, Gunstar Heroes, sent shock waves throughout the enthusiast gaming scene. It was the best action game anyone had ever seen by such a wide margin that we simply stood in awe. Since, they have gone on to produce nothing but pure magic. For the Genesis, Dynamite Headdy and Alien Soldier followed Gunstar, leaving an indelible mark on 16-bit, and then Treasure turned their attention to the Saturn and amazed us again with the groundbreaking 2D sensation Guardian Heroes, which stands as the best 2D beat-'em-up ever

Treasure are known for many things, one of which is creating incredible creatures. In Alien Soldier, they made a whole game of it—in Sin and Punishment, much of that 2D splendor is represented in 3D.



And on the seventh day, God created Treasure, and he said unto thee,
go and make thy games so that my people will be entertained

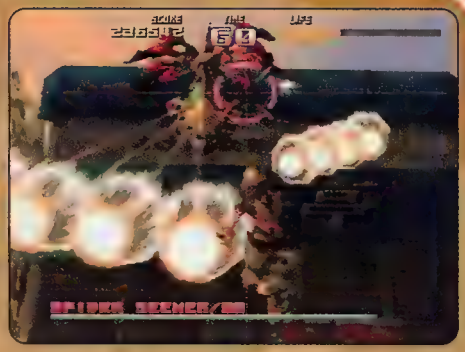
made.

But Treasure was only getting started. More recently, they've produced the world's best shooter, Radiant Silvergun, and their long-lost 2D gem, Silhouette Mirage (originally programmed for the 2D powerhouse Saturn), recently made its way to the PlayStation, where it currently ranks as the best 2D game for that console next to Castlevania: Symphony of the Night. And let's not forget Yuke Yuke Troublemakers (Mischief Makers in the U.S.), the pinnacle of 2D for the Nintendo 64, and Treasure's two between-projects games, the manic Rakugaki Showtime and Bangaio.

With Sin and Punishment, Maegawa and company have achieved "best ever" status once again, because it is by some degree the best straight action game for the Nintendo 64: Five years into its cycle, and they have literally taken every other developer to school. Treasure has the N64 doing things we have never seen it do (and didn't know it could) in a game that actually transcends the hardware. It doesn't matter what systems you own—Dreamcast, PS2, PC, whatever—everything else melts away as you sink into Sin and Punishment's amazing gameplay and form a connection with its incredible characters, science-fiction story, and ingenious gameplay.

The three main characters in the game—Achi, Saki, and Airan—are members of the Savior Group, commissioned to bring order and stability to a grave situation in Japan. In the not so distant future, due to rampant overpopulation and the resulting food shortages, humans engineer a new breed of lifeform, called Rufians, for consumption. It isn't long before the Rufians develop an appetite for people and begin devouring them. They quickly move into and overrun northeastern Japan, causing the government to call for the immediate evacuation of the capital city, sending its citizens into panic. Riots and mayhem break out everywhere, so the government calls in the International Safe Keeping Corp's Armed Volunteers unit, lead by a character we come to know as Brad. But when the Armed Volunteers begin turning on the people, the Savior Group is called in to battle not only the Rufians but to protect the people of Japan from the Armed Volunteers. Of course, once they arrive, a darker, more sinister underlying theme is revealed that serves as the catalyst for the action, played out in dramatic real-time cut scenes.

Treasure begins the game with a simple run-and-shoot level—an introduction to the targeting system, jumping, and left/right control of the character. From there, things escalate progressively, act by act, until, by the end of the game, you're practically having an out-of-body experience juggling all of the different play mechanics. You're seldom performing a singular task. At any given point in the game you may be targeting, shooting, deflecting, and jumping at the same time. Treasure has an amazing grasp of 3D game design and have a way of fusing game and player that is uncanny. With Sin and Punishment, they have distilled the nuances of their 2D games into a 3D experience, combining rail work similar to Panzer Dragoon's ground-based levels with the 3D shooting style of Contra, and the platforming and proximity combat of Gunstar Heroes. It is, in a word, amazing. The weight



and physics assigned to everything is pure perfection, and the balance is the stuff of legends. The game's never straightforward, and the first time you play Sin and Punishment is a mere training exercise for your performance once you have an understanding of each individual scene's strategy. The essence of any great game lies in its innovative nature and diversity, and no one knows this better than Treasure.

As for the look of the game, I don't dare try to label it or draw comparisons. I will simply say that Treasure has broken all of the barriers associated with 3D game design on the N64 (as they did with 2D in Mischief Makers) and created a game that is at once enigmatic, surreal, and full of grandeur. They've done something I can't quite put my finger on with the color palette that helps the game evoke a very specific mood. And, as with all of Treasure's games, special effects please the eye as much as the gameplay pleases the mind—Sin and Punishment is laden with a kaleidoscope of special effects that I haven't seen on any other console, including the Dreamcast and PS2. The character and creature designs are exquisite. The Rufians, a sort of cyber/organic hybrid, emanate a menacing presence, and the human factor is exotically alien with sharp skeletal features, mesmerizing facial expressions, and an almost disturbing level of kinetic energy.

Treasure seems to design and program with a sort of abandon, as if they're not aware of a system's limitations. I wonder if they even know that their games make everything else pale so miserably. They command the N64 like no one else, making it convey their vision, rather than perform a series of functions. There's a scene in Act 2 where Achi sinks an aircraft carrier and levitates a chunk of it to fly around and battle a huge Armed Volunteer fleet that simply defies logic. This whole game defies logic. All of this and I haven't even mentioned the music, which had me looking for the CD

slot in my N64. I'll be buying this soundtrack.

Deep down inside, what every Treasure fan really wants is a Gunstar Heroes sequel, but as we all know, Treasure doesn't make sequels...or do they? Besides being the best N64 action game ever created, Sin and Punishment has more than a few similarities with both Alien Soldier and, moreover, Gunstar Heroes: enemies that ride atop air ships and also hurl their minions at you, a train sequence, countdown gauges and specific weak spots on the bosses, proximity attacks, a serpentine first mini boss, an air battle, and even the fonts and credits look exactly like Gunstar's. And check out those guns. Remind you of anything?

Here's what Treasure president Masato Maegawa had to say about Sin and Punishment—and my sequel theory:

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: Sin and Punishment is an amazing achievement. We thank you for creating yet another epic action game.

Masato Maegawa: Thank you for the compliment.

GR: S&P seems to have many similarities with Gunstar Heroes: the guns, a sky scene, a train scene, villains that hurl bodies at you. Is there a connection? Is this the Gunstar sequel we've been begging for?

MM: No, the game has no relation whatsoever to Gunstar Heroes.

GR: There goes that theory... Is this the same team that did Gunstar and Guardian Heroes?

MM: The Sin and Punishment team did not work on Gunstar or Guardian Heroes. However, the programmers responsible for the enemy engine and the background designer worked on both. Because of that, you might feel the same ambience as those two games.

GR: I guess that explains it. Sort of... Here we are five years down the road with the N64 and you've managed to make it do things we

never imagined. What (or who) did it take to achieve the speed of the gameplay and the astonishing effects exhibited throughout the game?

MM: First of all, I have to thank Nintendo since they allowed us to use a high-capacity ROM. We used streaming technology for sound and achieved high quality and faster transaction speed. And through trial and error, we managed to speed up the 3D engine. In addition, I think the feel of speed in the game is largely affected by game design itself.

GR: It's the fastest N64 action game on the planet. The story is fantastic. Is it anime inspired or is everything original?

MM: Sin and Punishment is a completely original idea from the director.- Hideyuki Kannami.

GR: We noticed a credit to Super Mario Club. What is the connection?

MM: In order to make sure to release a quality game, we received various comments and opinions from them.

GR: Was the game planned for the U.S. from the beginning?

MM: Yes, it was.

GR: Is the length of the game determined by your satisfaction that the gameplay concept is fully explored and realized?

MM: When engaging in the development of games, I think it's hard for developers to achieve what they hoped for, or the concept from the beginning. But I think the game turned out quite close to what we hoped for.

GR: How does a game like this begin? Does it start with an image or a gameplay idea?

MM: Basically, we usually start with the gameplay concept, but everything happens concurrently, so it is hard to say which one comes first.

GR: The art for the game is truly amazing. Is this a new artist for Treasure?

MM: All the art was done internally. A young designer is responsible for the character design, but he is no rookie.

GR: That's for sure. Were the characters based on the art or the art based on the characters?

MM: The same designer worked on character designs and art, so I can't say which one is based on which.

GR: One thing we notice about Treasure games is that not only is the gameplay perfect in every way, but also the gameplay seems to blossom as the player must figure out how to overcome obstacles. How do you keep repeating this time after time?

MM: All of our team members share ideas which all revolve around the director. Since we always place a high priority on originality, we push for development with an emphasis on innovative concepts.

GR: Speaking of innovation, Gunstar Heroes, Guardian Heroes, Silhouette Mirage, Radiant Silvergun, Dynamite Headdy, Yuke Yuke Troublemakers, etc. You have always managed to innovate and consistently take action games (and gamers) to the next level. As one of very few companies in the world that can do so, what is your secret?

MM: Besides the planner, everybody on the development team exchanges and gives out ideas. Also, I think it is because we always pursue something new.

GR: Nintendo is publishing this game in Japan and America. How did this come about?

MM: I think it is natural that Nintendo is involved in the publishing and distribution of Sin and Punishment. We have already released two titles for N64 and have been hoping to release more original titles for it. So I brought a plan and explained it to Nintendo. They agreed with the content of our initial plan, so we decided to get into the production together.

GR: Will you be moving on to Gamecube then?

MM: I am interested in Gamecube. We would really like to develop titles. But any plan for Gamecube is currently still under consideration.

GR: It is so amazing to us that Treasure has not yet had a Dreamcast release in the U.S. Will you? Have you? Where's Gunbeat?

MM: For Dreamcast, we are releasing Bangai-O soon. Gunbeat... all the development has halted now, so we cannot comment on the release date.

GR: Thank you so much for your time and for another wonderful game. Treasure remains the most sacred developer for action gamers and we appreciate it more every year.

MM: Thank you and you're welcome. GR

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BEHIND THE SCENES AT MICROSOFT

BY MICHAEL PUCCINI

AN INTERVIEW WITH TEAM XBOX, PART TWO

The stunning Xbox ping-pong ball demonstration Bill Gates and Microsoft showed at the 2000 Game Developer's Conference last March offered but a small glimpse into the system's incredible computational power and ability to render real-life, real-time physics. The heart of this magnificent system will be three main, separate processors: the Intel P3 733MHz CPU, a custom-designed nVidia/Microsoft 300MHz GPU (graphics processing unit), and a custom-designed nVidia/Microsoft APU (audio processing unit).

Unlike other consoles, with the dedicated GPU handling all of the graphics calculations, the blistering CPU is free to work on other computing tasks, and it'll need to, as the chip is said to perform 1.2 trillion operations per second. The GPU itself, if ever needed to, can perform 150 million polygons per second.

With the APU enabling 256 separate audio channels, 3D audio support, and, among other features, Midi/DLS2 support, for the first time ever, the audio aspects of a video-game system are being given as much attention as the graphic aspects.

The combination of the three processors working together will create video gaming experiences the likes of which we've never seen before. From the beginning, the Microsoft Xbox team has had its mission to create the most developer-friendly, artist-driven gaming system ever created. And, even with the integrated broadband connection and hard drive, Microsoft plans to enter the console market in the same retail price range at which all other console systems have launched ($200 - $300).

Last issue, in Part One of our exclusive Xbox feature, we introduced Ed Fries and J Allard, the two men responsible for, respectively, creating the best first-party games possible and approving the best third-party games possible for the Xbox. In this, Part Two, we conclude the feature with in-depth conversations with the talent on the technical side of the Xbox equation—Seamus Blackley, Manager, Advanced Technology Group (ATG), and Chanel Summers, Creative Manager, ATG Content and Design Team and Microsoft Audio Evangelist.

(My interview with Seamus Blackley started after he spanked J Allard in an arcade unit game of Robotron 2084 with $100 riding on it—which not only gave me a firsthand impression that these guys are true gamers—serious gamers—but also well-paid gamers. But people are paid what they are worth and these people are worth every penny. Having received a master of science degree in physics from Tufts University in Boston, Blackley used to be a professional physicist and even conversed with famed physicist Stephen Hawkings. Blackley heads a team of engineers who provide technical support for Xbox developers, assuring they understand how to use the tools needed to create breakthrough games. He explains exactly what differentiates Xbox from PS2 and Gamecube; the answers may surprise you.)

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: What is it you do for Microsoft and the Xbox?

Seamus Blackley: I'm the head of the Advanced Technology Group. We do two levels of support. We have a worldwide organization that does frontline developer support for developers of Xbox. That means we have a whole staff of guys in

Japan, in Europe and in the U.S. Backing them up we have a research development group, kind of an architecture group, and we have a content support group. We do all the tools and middleware. We do all of the samples and demos. We are basically the advocates for the developers. Our job is to make Xbox games kick-ass, to leverage all the technology into cool games.

GR: How many people are a part of the Advanced Technology Group?

SB: There's over 50 now, and we're worldwide, so I'm always awake at 3 a.m. talking to some guy in Tokyo. But it's really important, because you have to understand that Xbox is entirely focused on development. People always ask us, what's the difference between Xbox and PS2 and Gamecube? And it's not technology, it has nothing to do with technology, although the technology is a part, the focus is on the developers. We want the games to kick ass. How do you make the games kick ass? Well, you give people the best piece of hardware you can; you give them the best software you possibly can; the best tools you possibly can. We designed the entire program around that, and then you respond to everything they need. So my guys on the ATG were there from the very start helping to define the technology, helping to define the operating system and incorporating all of the feedback we were getting from our visits into what our plan was.

GR: This is the first American console since Atari that's coming out and...

SB: [Emphatically] It is the first Western console. We have a Western approach. Japan has a really different approach to technology and you can see it in their products. And that's a big deal culturally. It's a huge deal. In fact, the guy who runs the ATG in Japan, the guy I'm always on the phone with at 3 a.m., he came from Sony Computer Entertainment in Tokyo, he was the guy who actually did a lot of the GS Cube demo for Sony. [*GS Cube is Sony's high-powered workstation that's 16 times as powerful as a PS2 and is the hardware used on the FF movie.*] We were going over some slides for a presentation in Tokyo, and the first slides he has says that the difference between Xbox and other consoles is that other consoles are focused on the hardware. And this is a weird thing for Japanese guys to grasp. They don't do PC games in Japan; it's all about the console there. And what happens with a typical console is that the hardware guys go off and try to make the best piece of hardware they can, and then they give it to the software people and the software people have to deal with it. The software design follows the hardware design. Xbox turns it on its head and that's why we have so much developer support, because Xbox does what you want it to do as a software guy. Which is what really matters, because they're making the games. And that's the big difference: Xbox is made by a software company and it's a software business. That's the big difference between the philosophies. You have Sony, who is a hardware company—I mean, they've come from the '50s making televisions and VCRs and Walkmans and Discmans and they really understand how to make super-high-quality consumer electronics. The unfortunate thing is that the games business is not a consumer electronics business, it's a software business. And that's the advantage we have.

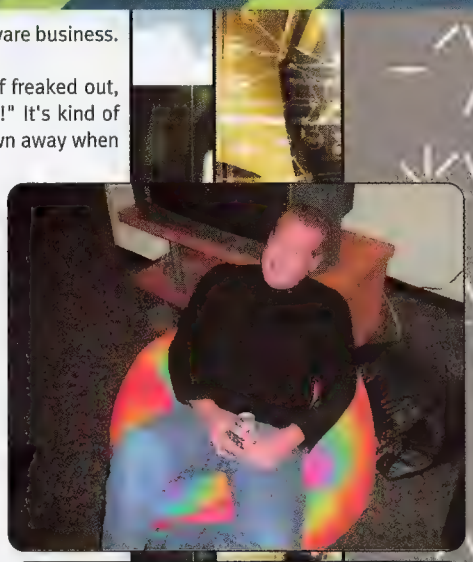
The Japanese developers are kind of freaked out, they're all, "What?! We're important?!" It's kind of cool. People are just shocked and blown away when we're so responsive. Like when they have questions and we do research for them, and when they talk to our developer support people, and when they find out that we have artists on staff, and they find out that we'll go and change our operating system plan to suit what they need. We really are focused on that, and that's why I have the best job in the world. Because I get to see all the games in development and I get to be the advocate for the developers.

GR: When you think about your job and your place in gaming history, how do you feel personally about being on the cusp of something that's going to break new ground and be around for 10, 20, 50, 100 years?

SB: I feel super nervous because, like, we could screw it up so easily—so easily. Everyone beats the hell out of Sony for not having enough systems for launch or for this or for that, but you don't hear Xbox people saying anything because we know how hard it is. There are a million things that can go wrong when you're launching a console, and you have to get them all right. So it's really hard. It's been one non-stop panic ride since January or February of 1999 when we first thought of doing this. First we were panicked because a few other guys and I who were pushing it through, we were fighting impossible odds at Microsoft...we thought. And then, magically, Microsoft said, "Wow, this is cool, we're into this." And then there was this panic rush like, "Oh my God, now we've got to do it and get it done."

It's not like when I was in other parts of the games industry or when I was doing physics, where you've a team of guys, and you do it yourself and if you're late it's because you're an idiot and you suck and you didn't do it right. It's like, we have to get all of that stuff right, plus all of our partners have to kick ass too. It has to be a big effort. So another big reason why I think Microsoft has an advantage is because we spend so much time making sure that our partners feel like they really are partners, like they're all part of the same thing. It's a big paradigm shift from the way other consoles have worked traditionally.

GR: Are you confident that the Xbox is superior to



Microsoft's physics powerhouse is in good hands—those of Seamus Blackley who has a Masters degree in the field and has been a professional physicist.

When this ping-pong demo was first shown in March 1999, the world witnessed Microsoft's balls firsthand.

At the heart and soul of the entire Xbox staff lies a bunch of hardcore gamers who are passionate about the art of gaming.

PS2?

SB: Absolutely. And the reason is because a few other people and I have really busted our asses to make sure that that was the case. You can talk about the performance and the peak rates and all that and it's all bullshit. Like all those pixel fill rates and triangle rates and all that—it's crap. I mean, sure, having 150 million theoretical vertices per second or whatever...no game will ever achieve that, right? Games are hard to write. You have to make compromises all over the place and you never get the peak performance. And everyone's complaining, "Oh, the PS2 launch games look bad, blah, blah, blah." And my response to you is, "F*** you."

It's hard to write a game on a new piece of hardware. So when we designed the Xbox, we were conscious of that. Most of the people who worked on the initial design had written a bunch of console games before. And we know that you have to have compromises in order to ship a piece of hardware that costs a reasonable amount. But you can chose where those compromises go so they don't get in the way. And that's the beautiful thing about the nVidia architecture and, in fact, with the Intel P3...a lot of people said, "Why didn't you get a RISC CPU?" Man, do you have any idea what the investment it's been over time in making the Intel CPU efficient and powerful and easy to program? It's just a sweet, sweet chip and you have that running totally and in parallel with this nVidia graphics processor that does environment mapping for free, programmable everywhere. I can show you a demo where we can draw fur in the same time it takes to draw a texture map. And you're going to see more effects like that. It's just crazy technology and it's really cool and it doesn't screw you over, it doesn't stall all the time and act up and get cranky. You have to care and feed for it properly, but it operates nicely because it's based on, like, 25 years of SIGGRAPH [a professional organization for computer science professionals] papers and research from guys who are from Silicon Graphics and from universities who then came to nVidia. This is the eighth generation of their hardware. It's just a very mature, sweet chip.

GR: Do you think that the Xbox is going to change the way games are made?

SB: We're going to bust our asses to make that the case. The reason for all the extra performance we put in is not because anyone will ever play 256 voices at the same time or will ever draw a million polygons a frame, but you want to have that overhead there so that instead of everything being about constraints and about asking the lead programmer what you can and can not do, instead it's all about the artist. An artist likes to be able to do what he/she wants. It's not always going to be the case. There's always constraints, but with Xbox you're going to see a different kind of game come out. At least that's what we're seeing so far. It really is our intention to change the focus of game design away from technology and toward art. And a lot of people ask, "When are video games going to become more mainstream?" And what has to happen for that to occur is for people to start making video-game purchasing decisions based on the same criteria that they use to make movie decisions or music decisions.

GR: The public perception of Microsoft isn't really about a gaming company, so what types of moves are you guys making to change that perception?

SB: The only thing that can change that is putting your money where your mouth is and coming out with the games. Obviously, Sony wasn't known for games at all when they came out with PSX and you can only turn it around when the games are there, and we understand that. We've made a lot of really good moves as far as getting the right developers and getting the right stuff, and now if we can pull it off and the games are awesome, then, yes, we do understand. I think we understand what needs to happen, but like I said before, there are so many things that can go wrong. That's why I'm not running around feeling super cocky and already accepting awards; it doesn't even occur to any of us. It's just like, "Holy shit! I have so much work to do today!" And that's what it's all about.

GR: What do you think are going to be the one or two aspects of the Xbox that will really differentiate the system?

SB: Well, there's the broadband connection and the hard drive, which are the stock answers because they have infinite potential and nobody's quite sure how those things are going to be realized. But everybody knows that that potential is there, which is why we took a cost hit to include them. Xbox is going to be the same price as a game console. So it was a decision on our part to do that because we think that we're going to more than make up for it in game sales by the kinds of games that we'll be able to have for Xbox which can't exist elsewhere. Period. The networking: you just can't do it on a Gamecube, sorry. So if somebody's going to do a really amazing, broadband, online soccer game with full chat and these beautifully detailed players with facial expressions...that's just not going to happen elsewhere. So that's important. Plus, like I said before, the fact that there's just so much damn performance on this thing. The fact that the tools are so good and we're focusing so much on the tools means the games are going to be artist driven. That's a huge difference. Why do you think Final Fantasy is so popular? It's because they have an art department and a couple programmers and they slay themselves to make that the case; Xbox will be very natural. The greatest moment in my life is when I read that Lorne [Lanning of Oddworld] said that they switched over to Xbox because it'll let them make their art and PS2 didn't. He switched his whole company's destiny over to Xbox because he knows that he can leverage his artists now, to make these beautiful experiences of Oddworld that he wants to. I mean, they're all about emotion. It's funny because there's this world they have and this story they're trying to tell and Xbox is designed for that kind of stuff.

GR: So how are you attracting these big developers? Is it through great licensing policies or covering development costs or what?

SB: No. We haven't bribed anyone. [The rumor mill] is kind of f***ed up. We're just like, "Hey, here's the box, here are the tools, go." We give everyone the same deal. We try to be really, really equitable towards everyone. There's no super secret special

sauce or anything like that. It's just a really fair deal. That's the whole thing. We didn't try to take this developer-centric approach just to technology, we took it with the business and the distribution and the publishing contracts and everything. We're just trying to be a really straight shooter. Our, kind of, internal model for Xbox is, "No Bullshit." It's like the lowest bullshit operation we can pull off. Y'know we encourage them to kick-ass and have great sales and get a lower royalty, otherwise everyone pays the same. And that's a huge deal for us...a huge deal. If you feel like your getting screwed over from a business standpoint, it does not contribute to making cooler games. Therefore, we don't do it.

GR: So the Xbox is going to be a straight gaming machine?

SB: It's a game box. You're not going to be able to do your taxes on it.

GR: Will it play DVD movies?

SB: It can play DVD movies and we'll be talking in the future about how it does that. But the strange thing is that by the time Xbox releases, DVD players are going to, like, come free in, like, a box of Trix [laughs]. So it's not that much of a huge feature, but it'll play CDs and we'll do some neat stuff around there, but it's just a game box.

GR: Why did you choose Havok to provide the physics tools?

SB: Our tools program is really simple. You have to have three things to be an Xbox tools developer. First of all, somebody who has an approved Xbox title has to ask for you. You have to have a compliant business plan—i.e. you can't be going out of business and therefore screwing out developers. And you have to go through our legal department and then pay us for the dev kits. And it costs more for the dev kits in the tools program than with the games guys, because there are no royalties involved. It's not that much more expensive; we try to be really fair because tools are really important.

GR: Why did you choose nVidia for the graphics chip as opposed to someone like 3Dfx?

SB: First of all, nVidia always ships on time. Always. Second, they always win all their performance benchmarks. They're way ahead of everybody else on the hardware T&L, on programmable stuff, the whole idea of pixel shaders, programmable vertex shaders, all the surface engine stuff, plus the way they do the caching, memory access, memory controllers—they're super advanced, really, really good. They've got a long history of work and they're really forward looking.

GR: So you guys are about 12 months out, right?

SB: Stop, your making me nervous. Making me feel like I've got to get back to work [laughs].

GR: So where are you at? What's your state-of-the-union?

SB: Well, we're ahead on some shit and a little behind on some shit and at the end of the day we're doing way better than I thought we would be. We're really on it. We have a lot of really driven guys on this project and it's really cool.

GR: How do you feel about the public and the media perception of Xbox?

SB: I couldn't be happier with it from the standpoint of the developers. Which is exactly who we're targeting right now. We're not going to really be talking to consumers until we have games to show them. So consumers are still going to hear wacky shit, probably stuff like we'll never be as good as on PC or we'll never have titles as good as Nintendo...I don't know what people are thinking right now. We went through this stage before the big announcement at GDC, everybody was saying, "Oh, the PS2 has so much better technology." Then after GDC, people were like, "Oh, of course they have great technology. But they'll never get publishers." Then we do the publisher announcement and it's like, "Oh, well they don't have Square or EA, now they're just dead." It just keeps on going on forever until you actually show the games. So, I guess from my standpoint, I'm as happy as I could be. Honestly, my recommendation to anybody looking at this whole thing is, wait until you see the games.

GR: What's it like working with Bill Gates?

SB: It makes you happy you work for Microsoft. Because, I've never met an executive in my life who has such a firm grasp of his entire business. It's crazy. We went in there the first time and said, "We have this video-game system, etc.," and he asked a bunch of questions and we all answered them and we scheduled another meeting. We came to that next meeting and he had looked stuff up and he knew more about some things than we did. And he makes sure you know what the hell you're talking about. He knows the whole business that Microsoft has and all the different places you should get stuff and he's very clear on what sucks and what's good and who's doing well and who's not. It's just incredibly impressive.

GR: Is he providing good input on Xbox?

SB: Absolutely. He's just unbelievably sharp. He's one of the smartest guys I've ever met. He's just completely on top of shit. He's awesome.

GR: Are you setting out to change the gaming market or do you just...

SB: Always. I had the shit kicked out of me for Trespasser—that we f***ed up by shipping too soon and not really polishing it. But every single game I've ever worked on I've been trying to change things fundamentally. It's always about trying to move things forward, right? So, with Xbox...absolutely, man, we're trying to give power to these artists. We're trying to change games to be art. That was on all of our minds when we first started the Xbox project. Then the PlayStation 2 edition of *Newsweek* came out and in it there's this editorial where the guy was saying that video games were not art. And I wanted to f***ing throttle that asshole. There are games that are art and more than anything else in the world...having worked in the industry and seen the love and unbelievable devotion to the art form of video games, the art of interactive entertainment...I do want to see it elevated there. So, yeah, Xbox, to an almost psychotic extent, is our attempt to really do that. And, yeah, it's just a game console and it's

going to play games. That's what it does. Yeah, sure, it's a piece of plastic and it's going to sit in the living room and play games. But at some point there is going to be that special transition that occurs and the difference between Xbox and the other consoles at the end of the day is that we've designed it to accelerate that transition. And with that said, I'm going to go do work.

(The most eccentric of the people I spoke with at Microsoft was audio evangelist Chanel Summers. That's not a negative attribute; in fact, if anything, it's a high compliment, as she was the most passionate of all of them in speaking about the Xbox technology, her work and the art of video games. Just as Blackley works with developers on the graphical side to help them utilize the graphic tools to the fullest, Summers has the same objective on the audio side. In addition to having previously worked as a game designer and producer at other companies, she moves to the Advanced Technology Group from the Microsoft DirectX team, having worked on the interactive audio technologies DirectSound, DirectSound3D, DirectShow Audio and Direct Music. Summers detailed how the Xbox is going to change the way we listen to game audio. She also has the coolest piercings I've ever seen.)

GR: I was invited to the private Xbox viewing at E3 and, although the graphics demo was impressive, what I remember most was an audio demo where a guy was moving around the screen with a cursor and the sounds were merging and dissipating.

Chanel Summers: The sphere demo...basically that is to show off how we can transition from different musical styles seamlessly and not have it seem abstract that they can blend well together. So if you think of that in a game situation, if you're going from, like, say, an ambient, peaceful scene into battle then into another kind of scene, that will all blend. Or if two forces have themes, when they come together to fight, their themes can blend together and not sound abstract.

What that was using was our Direct Music Technology (DMT), and that was actually the DirectX.7 version; on Xbox it's all DirectX.8. That was all software emulated, not any of our audio hardware, so you can imagine how it's going to be so much better.

The DMT allows you to create interactive and variable audio, so I can have audio that changes, is not repetitive. One of the biggest problems with game audio is that it is repetitive and annoying and so you eventually turn it off. Which I always say is a very sad thing. Even though it could be a really fabulous musical score, it could be a high-quality, amazing John Williams score, but after the fifth time you play the game, it's tiresome and you don't want to hear it anymore. With DMT, the score can always be fresh and played subtly, differently, different notes, different chords.

GR: So it's not really one song that's scripted and recorded for the game, it's just notes?

CS: Basically, what you're doing is you're laying down the basic score and then you're breaking it up into different constituent parts and creating variations within that. And you can create variations within, like, the note level or higher up. So I could have a piece play exponentially huge amounts of ways. If I just had two instruments, I could have it play 1,064 different ways. So I can create all this variation within my piece, and as I said, that can go all the way to the note level or higher layers if I don't want to have it so finely done.

I can also have the audio correspond to what's happening on the screen. Think of a lot of those Looney Tunes cartoons, where they had the characters walking around and there's all sorts of sounds associated with what he's doing.

GR: How hard is it going to be for a developer to compose audio for their game? Is it going to be something user-friendly right out of the box or is it something where I'm going to have to be Beethoven?

CS: This technology is part of the DirectX technologies. It's fairly new. We launched it in February of 1999 and it's been used by the PC games developer community, so a lot of PC games people have familiarity with it. We've also conducted a number of composer's workshops, where we teach the composers how to use the authoring tools. There's an authoring tool called Direct Music Producer. The programmer doesn't do any of this. This is mostly in the content creator's hand, so he works within this authoring tool. The composer maps out all the parameters in this tool, how things will be broken up, how things will transition.

The other thing is that we are enabling scripting. In that respect, all the implementation details are in the hands of the content creator, because he can script it all up. The only thing that he'd have to work with a programmer on is how the programmer takes those scripts and writes the triggers in the game. That's for people who want completely content-driven audio, where audio is very important to them and they want it left to the people who know it best.

Basically, we have three software layers, three software options that we give people on Xbox. There's Direct Sound (DS) that allows you to do code-driven audio. That's for the programmers who like to do the audio themselves. They say to the content creator, "Just give me some wave files." And they want to code-up how the engine works and everything. Those are the total bit twiddlers. DS maps directly to the hardware. Pretty much anything that the audio chip is physically capable of, DS does, DS has full access to that. Then we have Direct Music (DM). DM provides two other things: the interactive and variable audio functionality and it's seen as one of the more easier, audio APIs [Application Program Interface] for simple functionality. And then we have scripting. Taking a step back, DS is what we call the code-driven API. DM is the partially-code-driven partially-content-driven API, because you've got a composer working with the authoring tool, building the elements in the authoring tool and then handing the config file to the programmer. Then you've got scripting which is fully content-driven, because pretty much all of the audio implementation details are put into the audio designers hand and not into the

developer's hand. The developer's just really agreeing with the audio designer on what are the triggers they want and then taking those scripts and implementing them into the game.

GR: How is this going to change the way I play a game on Xbox?

CS: When we were first designing Xbox, we saw that consoles traditionally did not heavily invest in audio, they heavily invested in graphics, and if you look at PSX to PS2, they took their audio and they just sort of doubled it. They didn't do much more to it, so there's a lot of frustrated audio designers out there saying, "Nobody cares about what we do." We see that audio is a huge differentiator and we see that great gaming encompasses the entire experience, it's not just about having phenomenal graphics. We see that really focusing on audio a lot will increase gameplay, make it much more cinematic and not make it so gamey.

With our audio hardware and our software, we're trying to give audio designers what they've always dreamed of: a lot of power, a lot of options and to be able to make content without compromise.

GR: Is the audio hardware a proprietary chip?

CS: I can actually say, because they've released a press release on it: nVidia is doing the audio hardware. It's unbelievable. It's this incredibly engineered chip. You've got 256 total voices, or audio channels, whereas the PS2 has 48. Sixty-four of these can be 3D voices, and again, our 3D processing, our effects processing, is all in hardware. So, like the graphics chip...the audio chip is very similar in that it's a multi-processor, pipeline-stage architecture. We have four processors and three of those are DSPs [Digital Ssignal Processor]. First, we've got the setup processor; I like to call it the traffic cop. It handles all of the communication between all the other processors, it does memory management, list mapping; it's a DMA engine. It then talks to the voice processor. The voice processor is a fixed function DSP. This is where all the mixing, all the filtering of all 2D and 3D voices takes place. That talks to the global processor, our effects processor.

GR: What's the difference between a 2D and a 3D voice?

CS: 3D voice means it's spatialized in X, Y and Z space, and 2D is just flat.

GR: A term that I've been associating with the Xbox is environmental audio. What's that?

CS: It was actually a standard that was first done for the PC. It's basically a standard way of how to do environmental audio modeling and aclusion obstruction processing, which means the modeling of the muffling of sounds. If I'm talking to you, it should sound differently if I have an obstacle between us. So it makes it so you can now have much more realistic sound effects, where before on consoles they've been traditionally preprocessed. It also means if I'm walking in one environment, if I'm a robot with my big, clangy, heavy, metal feet, if I'm walking in a factory my footsteps should sound differently in there than if I'm out walking in a field.

GR: So you're saying that the audio package you're providing in Xbox will be able to simulate a myriad of sounds?

CS: Well, you'll definitely have all the tools you need to create much more realistic aural environments and aural experiences. I was going to add that after the global processor, which does the effects processing, you then have the end-code processor. And I had mentioned that the voice processor was a fixed-function DSP, the global processor is a fully programmable DSP and the end-code processor is a dedicated DSP to real-time, multi-speaker surround.

GR: So the Xbox does support Dolby Digital?

CS: We actually can't really talk about that at this time [grins]. We'll be making some announcements in the next few weeks. So all I can really say is that we're supporting real-time, multi-speaker surround.

GR: So it will definitely work with standard digital receivers?

CS: Umm...again I can't [laughs]. You're good.

GR: Are the audio capabilities one of the things that the Xbox is going to excel at?

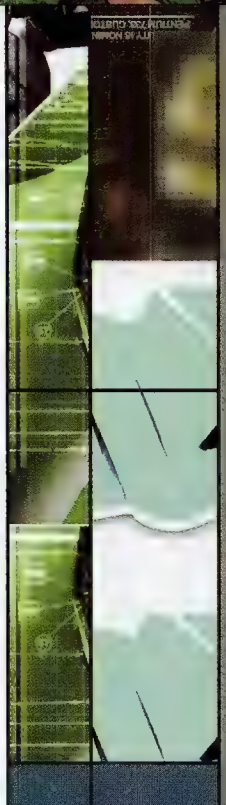
CS: It's definitely going to be something we excel at. As I said, we didn't want to just make this amazing graphics machine. The whole thing about Xbox is that it raises the entire gaming experience. It's not just about one piece of the pie.

What we're trying to do with audio on the Xbox is that if you see all the services that major studios and post-production facilities have always offered, we'll be offering those same services but in real-time. So this is going to be something quite special.

GR: Do you oversee the whole sound department for the Xbox?

CS: When I originally came on to the Xbox team as the audio manager, I was making sure that audio, both software- and hardware-wise, was going to be stellar and was really going to be pushing the boundaries. I was also working with developers to educate them on what we're doing and to get their feedback on that. Now I've got a new role. I've actually created a new team called the Content and Design Team. And how you can think of it is sort of as developer support for non-programmers. We're actually doing something very new that Sega and Sony and Nintendo don't do: everyone traditionally has developer support where they help out the programmers and they help out on technical issues. My team is there to go help out the content creators, to help out the artists, to help out the musicians and sound designers, to help out the game designers. In my talks with developers about forming this team, they're very excited because they're like, "Nobody ever helps out our art teams and nobody usually can within the [system manufacturer] company." And

Bill Gates told the Xbox team that he wanted the most powerful, advanced video game system possible. It appears that's what he's getting.



we're really excited that someone can help them learn a lot of the new real-time graphics techniques and show them the advantages of this. And also help them move from where they are, from where they're used to doing art for PlayStation and Nintendo and Sega games to understanding what's really possible on the Xbox. And thinking more of cinematic experiences rather than just here's this one model.

GR: Is all of this going to be more friendly because of the fact that there is a hard drive and there will be tons of memory for developers?

CS: First of all, we are giving you more RAM that's ever been available on a console before. You've got this 64MB that can be split between any of the processors—the CPU, the GPU, and the APU—however you want, and you can change it at different times and it's very fast and flexible to do. So, first, you've got all this RAM and second, even if you do run out of RAM for audio, you can cache the audio onto the hard drive and then access it, so the hard drive is an audio designer's best friend. But again, we've got that audio chip, so mostly everything's being done in hardware, so you're taking up very little, if any CPU for audio. And also, think about that: if you have to go and use some CPU, it is a Pentium III 733. It's not like audio is going to affect your frame rate.

GR: Damn...that's quite amazing. What thoughts go through your head about being able to create this piece of gaming history? Are you so engrossed in your work that you don't have the time to think about what you're doing?

CS: No, I actually do think about what I'm doing a lot and I really can't believe it. Someone asked me the other day, they said, "Chanel, is this the pinnacle of your career?" And I said, "You know what, it really, really is." Because I've come from the game industry and have had a really good career in the game industry, but there's been nothing like this where I'm actually going to be making history. And to me, that's a chance in a lifetime.

GR: Man! That's what I've been trying to get out of everybody else all day. Leave it to a female to give me the answer I wanted.

[Everyone laughs.]

GR: How do you like working for Bill Gates? What's that like?

CS: Well...it's pretty good. I mean, I don't actually get to see Bill on a regular basis.

GR: But you do have to have meetings with him, right?

CS: We've had meetings with him and to me he's probably one of the smartest people I've ever known. Therefore, he's probably one of the people I'd ever really trust doing a project of this magnitude for. I mean, if anybody can pull it off, it's Bill and it's his company. I think that other people would have a tough time and other people have had a tough time trying to do a successful console. And I think that with Bill and with Microsoft, with all of the support, with all of the intelligence, this is something we can definitely pull off. **GR**

Chanel Summers' expertise in game audio programming will make games, like Munch's Oddysee (below), sound as good as they look.

ONI

BY DAVE HALVERSON

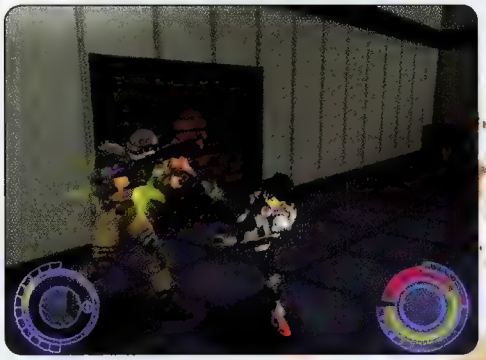
PlayStation 2 owners' date with Konoko is almost here. Better wear a bullet-proof vest and pack some serious heat

Bungie's ONI—the topic of our steamy June 2000 cover—is finally heading into the final leg of development for the PS2. Set to reawaken the latent action-adventure genre, ONI will be bringing its innovative play mechanics and long overdue anime-inspired character design to the table just as the PS2 closes in on the 1 million mark. A good place to be? Yeah, I think so.

Playing ONI, two things are instantly discernable: many of the environments border on gargantuan, and Konoko is one slippery minx; I believe she's ready for her close-up. The art of the game lies in her Matrix-meets-Tomb-Raider fighting style. Equally at ease using martial arts or firearms, she has a move for every occasion: high kicks, low sweeps, choke holds—you name it. She's an ass kickin' machine. Regardless of where her assailant attacks from, she has a close combat move to deal with it, as well as a block. And in the event that a would-be assailant has got some distance on her, once she closes the gap enough to knock the weapon free, she can tuck, roll, and emerge firing in one fell swoop. What's better is that all of this complexity is achieved using fairly basic button maneuvers.

You'd think ONI would have a terribly steep learning curve with so many moves, but it's really quite manageable. Most of Konoko's reactions are based on proximity, and once you master her controls, the key strategy seems to be the careful scrutiny of each environment. When I ran ahead taking on all comers, I ended up getting sniped like a fish in a barrel.

Besides deep play mechanics and engrossing environments, ONI also exhibited ample amounts of real-time story and puzzle elements in the short time I played it, so the prognosis is good. The key factors in the game's final stages will be issues regarding the frame rate, textures, and music. If everything buttons up nice and tight, look for ONI to be one of the PS2's very best first-generation offerings. GR



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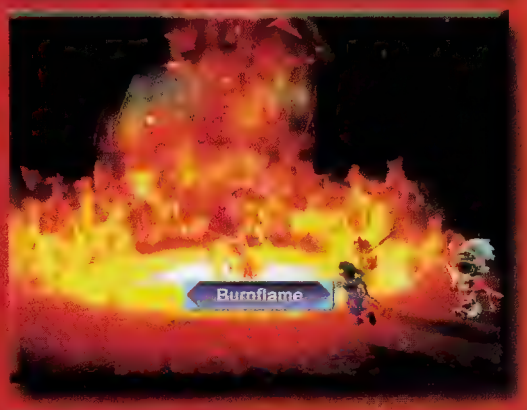

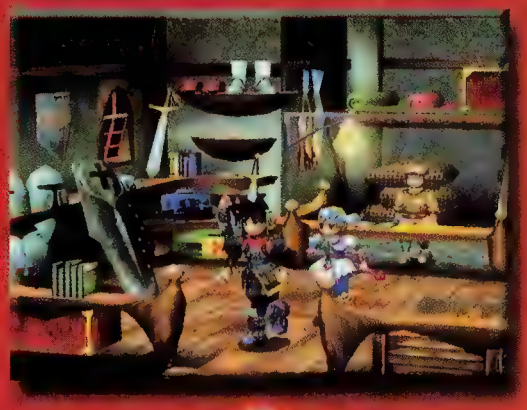

GRANDIA II

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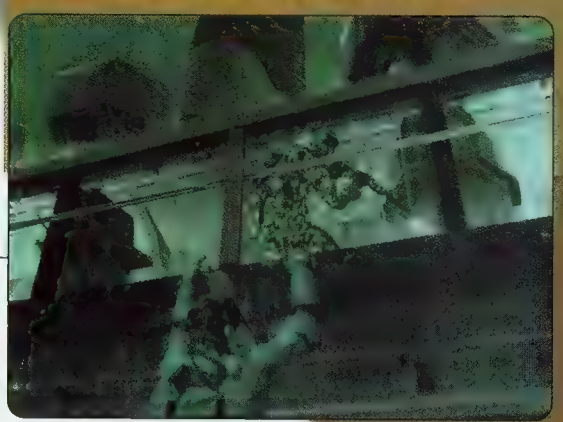
METAL GEAR SOLID 2

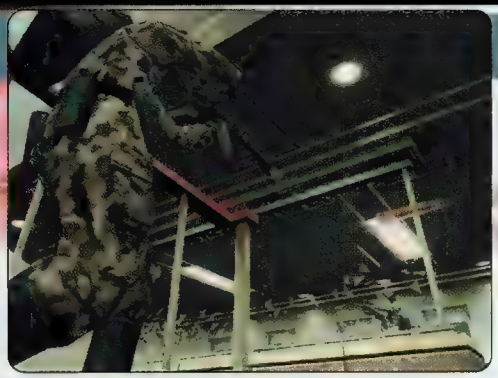
BY BRADY FIECHTER

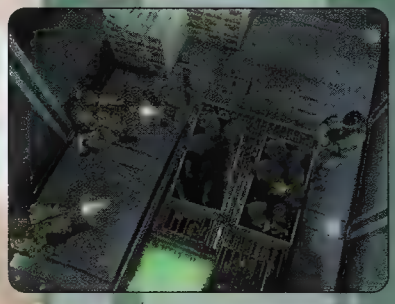
If you're not familiar with Metal Gear Solid or this sequel, it's OK, because we all have our problems

OK, so maybe we're all still waiting patiently for that one bombshell that destroys our current perception of video games. If screen shots and short video clips are enough to go by, Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty is such a game—a profound work of art, a monumental masterpiece, a completely new experience.

I know, I know: that's just the type of unchecked hyperbole that leads to the scratching of heads when the house doesn't shake every time The Next Big Game is fired up. So let's look at Metal Gear Solid 2 with guarded optimism and lay out a few of the facts: (A) Metal Gear Solid 2 is the sequel to one of the best games on the PlayStation—to some, one of the best games ever. (B) New technology is freeing director Hideo Kojima's design ideas to new and exciting possibilities. (C) If it wasn't immediately apparent, Kojima obviously has a keen design sense and recognizes the powerful presence a rich score







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PERSONA 2

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

When rumors become truth, nightmares become reality. Delve into a bizarre world of mystery and madness

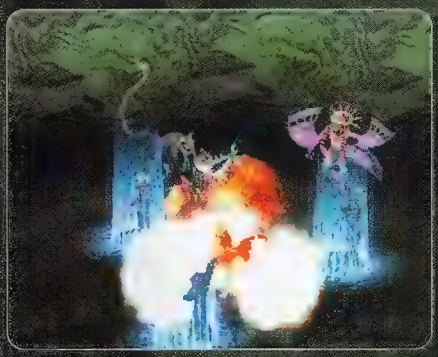
Persona 2 is not your typical RPG. Far from your standard sci-fi-fantasy save-the-world fare, Persona 2 breaks through the stereotypical RPG mold and is set to deliver a mysterious, compelling, and intense adventure where mystical underpinnings and real-world settings drive the suspense home.

When Persona 2 begins, the player is cast as Maya Amano, an alluring magazine journalist who is assigned the daunting task of reporting on a series of bizarre murders. With each murder more brutal and violent than the last, Maya sets out to uncover the truth behind the killer who is known only as Joker, and it isn't long before she witnesses one of the killings first hand. At first, Joker and his demon-summoning powers seem overwhelming, but Maya and her friends are quickly granted the power to call upon personas—magical beings drawn from a person's inner spirit that grant powers of attack and healing.

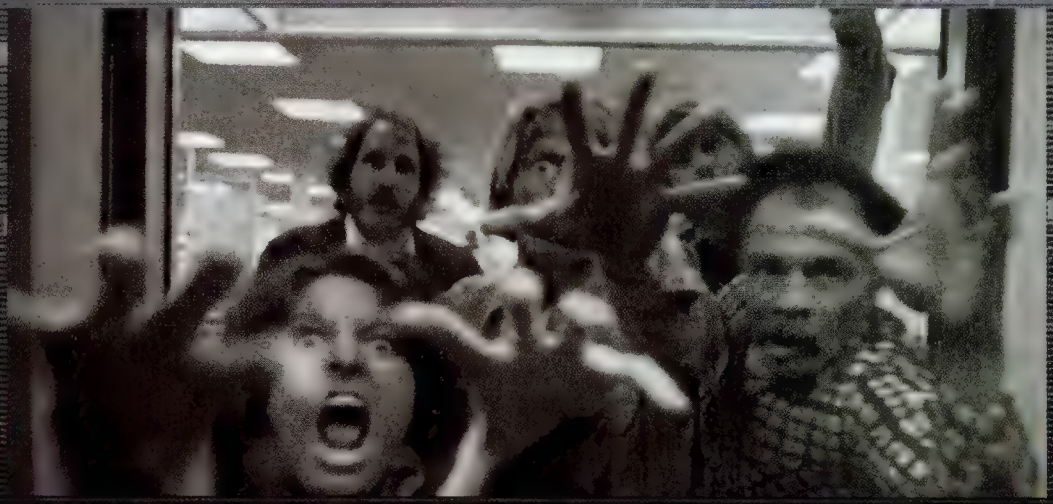
Use of the personas is the key to the gameplay. Each persona grants unique powers, be it elemental magic, physical strikes or recovery abilities. Though you start out with only one persona per character, you can gain up to 80 throughout the adventure, and the more you use each persona, the better techniques it learns.

But there's much more than just the persona powers when it comes to Persona 2's unique gameplay. In each battle, you have the option of making contact with the enemies. By learning the enemies' personalities and using the appropriate characters in conversation, you can get the monsters to be your allies or convince them to give you items. If it sounds strange, it is, but making contact is important to gaining new personas. Yet at the same time, striking a balance between contacting and fighting is necessary for success. Another new gameplay twist is the rumor system. In the world of Persona 2, all it takes for a rumor to become reality is for it to be believed among the people, and players can actually change the gameplay world by spreading rumors through an agency.

With its numerous gameplay innovations, its serious, dramatic, adult-oriented storyline (how many games have lines like, "the goodness of a woman isn't in her bra"?), and stunning blend of anime stylings and realistic environments, Persona 2 should be a more than worthwhile RPG experience. GR



Ten people locked in a house with no GR...



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ILLBLEED

preview by **d. halverson** • *dev:* **climax graphics** • *pub:* **jaleco** • *avail:* **january**

It's the game that will make you shit with fear. Oh yeah, that is exactly what the Japanese promotional video declares. That, among other things. The thing is, judging by these disturbing screen shots (check the weird toy—eeewww) they just might be on to something. IllBleed is brought to you by Climax Graphics, the same team responsible for the impressive first-generation Dreamcast game, Blue Stinger. Together with Jaleco, they're looking to paint a brand new picture on the face of the adventure horror genre, and they only intend on using one color—red. The game scenario features pleasant new aspects like a Horror Monitor and keeps track of your senses—eyesight, hearing, smell, and the sixth sense, monitoring your level of fear. Sound horrible? Hey, we're just getting started. There's also a Shock Rating that rates your Shock Death and Faint Away (lovely), as well as an Adrenaline Meter, which we presume that, once filled, will result in your character going completely freakin' berserk, just as she's about to get splattered all over the floorboards. This game does everything but bleed. Hey—there's a new packaging idea! We'll have a dead-on review next month. **GR**

ATV OFFROAD FURY

preview by **d. halverson** • *dev/pub:* **sony** • *avail:* **january**

Twenty tracks, free-roaming environments, realistic physics, and 12 ATVs with which to assault two-square-mile areas of realistic terrain. Where do I sign up? This looks like the PS2 game I've been waiting for, a perfect off-road simulation to join Moto GP—the perfect on-road simulation—in topping off the PS2 racing arsenal very nicely. Variables such as traction, acceleration, top speed, and stability—depending upon the landscape—will all come into play as you tear up Sony's ATV Offroad Fury. And if you get bored with the tracks on hand, you can even lay down some fresh tracks of your own with the track editor. There are six different types of events on hand and three styles of bikes to choose from, including the big three—Honda, Yamaha and Kawasaki—in enduro or cross country models. Sony held an event to roll out the game just before we closed the issue, and our editor in attendance reported back with nothing but praise. Needless to say, we'll blow the doors off this one in the next issue. **GR**

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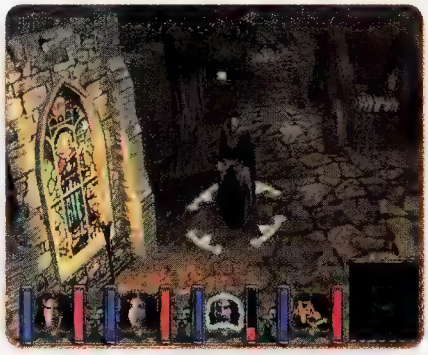
LEGION: LEGEND OF EXCALIBUR

preview by: **k. kencade** • *dev:* **midway** • *pub:* **7-studios** • *avail:* **winter**

Leaving Westwood and the Command and Conquer series behind to explore the freedom of his own company, Eric Yeo formed 7-Studios and the start of Legion: Legend of Excalibur, a strategy game rich in action and RPG elements. Based on the Arthurian legend, the game is being directed to feed off story for intrigue. An epic presentation steeped in frenetic battles is what the team is ultimately shooting for. While the game contains bits and pieces of PC real-time strategy ideas, a more console-oriented approach is being taken to the game's design. **GR**



LEGEND OF THE BLADE MASTERS

preview by **k. kencade** • *dev/pub:* **ripcord** • *avail:* **january**

Inspired by the kinetic presentation of anime and created in the rich tradition of medieval fantasy, Legend of the Blade Masters is a multiplayer RPG designed for play on Sega.Net. The 41 levels have been hand-modeled, offering quest-based missions underpinned by a detailed story; the focus is not only on an online experience. Told through the actions of either a Warrior, Black Knight, Orc, Dwarf or Elf, the story concerns the uncovering of seven magical swords, sought by a quartet of belligerent warlords know as the Guardians. **GR**

SHRAPNEL: URBAN WARFARE 2025

preview by **b. fiechter** • *dev/pub:* **ripcord games** • *avail:* **january**

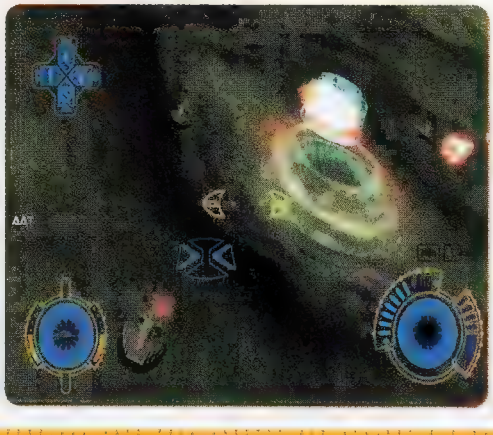
In this futuristic first-person shooter, combat is "based on classified light infantry strategy" of the "Armed Forces' notorious 'Land Warrior' regiment." I have no idea what that means, but it sounds really cool. What's also cool is that the game will support eight opponents online, in such familiar modes as deathmatch and cooperative team play. Land, air and sea vehicles can be commanded across gritty city and industrial settings, where your primary objective is to shoot "weaponry based on formerly-classified munitions designs." Can't wait for this one. **GR**

STAR FIGHTER

preview by **m. hobbs** • *dev/pub:* **lucasarts** • *avail:* **winter**

Rogue Squadron was one of the great Star Wars games. Its mix of arcade style speed and multiple-objective missions struck a nearly perfect blend between action and strategy. LucasArts seems to be going for a similar dynamic with Star Wars Episode One: Starfighter for PS2.

Sometimes following closely the events of the film, both ground- and space-based missions make the most of the PS2's rendering capabilities with highly detailed ship models and richly colored, complex environments. Playing as three different pilots throughout the game, you'll have access to several craft taken directly from the film, like the beautiful Naboo fighters, along with some original designs. **GR**



WORLD DESTRUCTION LEAGUE

preview by **b. fiechter** • *dev/pub:* **3do** • *avail:* **january**

It's the future, and of course everything is in ruin, disease is choking out what life remains, and people are generally displeased. For entertainment, society takes great pleasure in the destruction of fellow man as sport. As a combatant in the World Destruction League, you're job is to claw your way to the top by becoming proficient in the controls of heavily armed aircraft. Mass explosions and death to all in your path occurs in such post-apocalyptic locations as Australia, New York, Antarctica and Thailand. **GR**

THUNDER TANKS

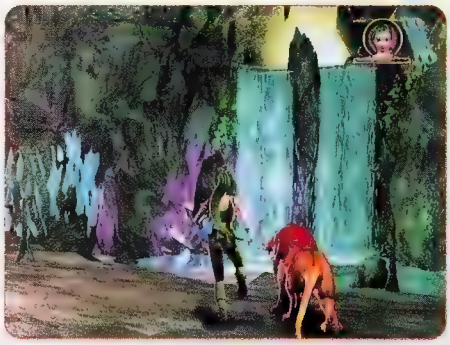
preview by **b. fiechter** • *dev/pub:* **3do** • *avail:* **winter**

The World Destruction League Television Network is at the top of the ratings thanks to the popular mayhem of "Thunder Tanks." The world is experiencing a bit of unhappiness due to the apocalypse, so for a bit of a pick-me-up, the people enjoy watching tanks kill each other for sport. Large arenas are the stage for the mayhem, enclosed in popular landmarks like Red Square and the Ginza District of Tokyo. The basic idea is to deploy heavy artillery, bring down every moving object around you, and be the last man standing. **GR**

PORTAL RUNNER

preview by **b. fiechter** • *dev/pub:* **3do** • *avail:* **winter**

In the action-adventure Portal Runner, teamwork plays a central role to your success. Vikki from Sarge's Heroes uses a bow and arrow for long-range attacks, working closely with her companion Leo, a lion who uses his strength in close combat. Combining elements of action, puzzle solving and platforming, the game also relies on storytelling to develop a bond between the central characters. While the visual style is appealing in its surreal design, note that the screen shots are only concepts. **GR**



UNREAL TOURNAMENT

preview by **b. fiechter** • *dev:* **epic** *pub:* **infogrames** • *avail:* **december**

Did you know that Unreal Tournament is better than Quake III? Before I upset too many sensitive Quake quaks, let me retract that statement. Besides, the network play hasn't been implemented yet, so we'll have to wait till next month before Unreal can officially go toe to toe with Quake. I will, however, leave you with this: Unreal Tournament is more satisfying than Quake III offline. **GR**

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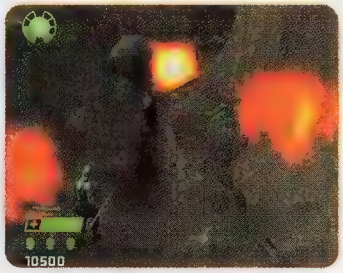
GORKAMORKA

preview by **k. kencade** • *dev/pub:* **ripcord games** • *avail:* **january**

Inspired by the Games Workshop Dungeons and Dragons-like boardgame Gorkamorka, this combat racing game pits up to eight teams of two against each other in online battles. Racing takes place across locations from the Warhammer 40,000 universe, where a truckload of hazards litter the primitive landscape, and unruly spectators make matters worse by disrupting the competition. **GR**



ARMY MEN: GREEN ROGUE

preview by **b. fiechter** • *dev/pub:* **3do** • *avail:* **february**

The Green and Tan armies are at it again. But frustrated by its endless whoopins, the Green Army has created a genetically enhanced super-soldier cleverly called the Omega Soldier. We're not quite sure as to the finer details of Army Men: Green Rogue, but other than the "exclusive Plastosheen effect [that] makes characters appear like real plastic toys," you can probably expect the game to be somewhat like the other Army Men games: there will be a lot of battles with toys and you'll be required to shoot at the enemy. **GR**

NBA LIVE 2001

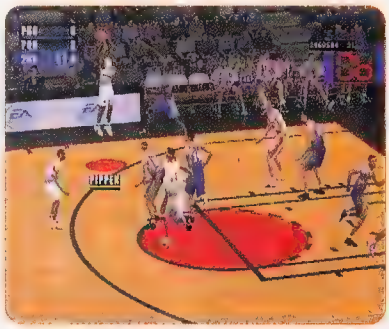
preview by **m. puccini** • *dev/pub:* **ea** • *avail:* **winter**

The reason why this isn't in the sports section is because this playable preview version literally arrived on the last day of working on this issue and, with the sports section already done, I absolutely had to find space for it somewhere.

The first thing immediately noticeable is the look of the game, which is quite impressive. The character models, with nearly perfect player faces, are so clean and the animations so plentiful, once you play it, you'll never play the PS version again.

The second thing worth mentioning is that the NBA Live engine now includes a small, dual status meter under the players that indicates turbo level and stamina level.

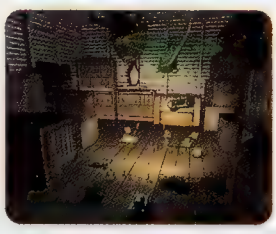
The control and gameplay are classic NBA Live fare—great news for NBA Live purists like myself. At this point, the AI seems to be a bit tighter—both on offense and defense—and the overall presentation looks superb. And with new moves, like a drop step and an up-and-under move, NBA Live 2001 for PS2 looks like it is going to have an excellent rookie year. **GR**



ARMY MEN AIR ATTACK 2

preview by **b. fiechter** • *dev/pub:* **3do** • *avail:* **winter**

General Plastro has been traveling to Our World in search of plastic to feed his troop factories. As hero of the good guys, your Army Men are deployed via helicopter to hopefully complete the 25 missions needed for total annihilation of the enemy. If you've played Air Attack, you can look forward to the many new additions to this PlayStation 2 sequel. The game's bigger, offering exclusive levels like the Miniature Golf Course and Big Brother's Room, and the AI is being enhanced for much more involving play. And to give the tiny world a more convincing sense of presence, physical forces such as wind, gravity and fans will manipulate your heli-



007 RACING

preview by b. flechter • dev/pub: ea • avail: january

If you haven't had a chance to order your own $125K BMW Z8 rocket ship, the PlayStation 2 rendering will have to do for now. In 007 Racing, you get to drive BMW's latest, as well as other Bond cars, equipped with gadgets and weapons like in the movies. Your mission is to drive without regard to safety, destroying everything in your path, and if you feel responsible, you can employ more skillful maneuvering to fulfill your mission objectives. Inspired by Bond locations, exotic cities and countrysides will include Mote Carlo and New York. GR

DEVIL MAY CRY

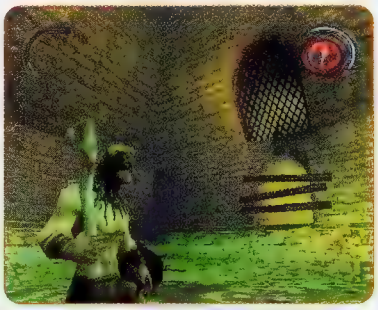
preview by b. flechter • dev/pub: capcom • avail: 2001

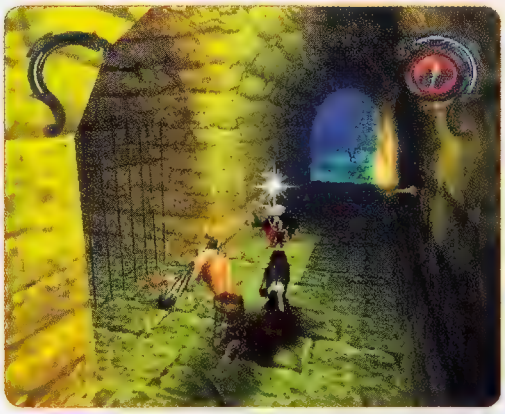
Produced by Shinji Mikami, the creator of the extraordinary Resident Evil and Dino Crisis games, Devil May Cry continues the macabre visions of the original master of video-game horror. At the center of the abyss is a sword carrying, gun-wielding half demon, half man, a bringer of peace who thrives on the power of the underworld. His mission is to investigate spiritual unrest and demon possessions, released on the world during what is known as the Dark Raid. GR

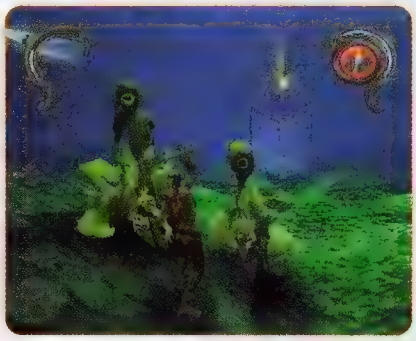
WARRIORS OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

preview by m. hobbs • dev/pub: 3do • avail: fall

3Do's Warriors of Might and Magic for the PS2 continues to make progress, the latest build highlighting the game's large environments and focus on close range combat. But there is still much work to be done in getting the frame rate up and refining the collision detection and control, but the basic framework is in place for this 3D adventure, which, according to 3DO, uses 16-20 times the amount of polygons as the PlayStation game. Other graphical touches include anti-aliasing, mip-mapping, and real-time shadows, bringing the proper next generation sheen to the title. But let's just hope this game turns out better than some of 3DO's other releases. GR







SEGA STRIKES BACK

PROVING THAT THEY'RE ONLY JUST GETTING STARTED, SEGA PULLED OUT A BUNCH OF SURPRISES AT THEIR EXECUTIVE GAMES SUMMIT. AFTER A GREAT 2000, NEXT YEAR PROMISES TO BE EVEN BETTER. SEGA'S ON A MAJOR ROLL.

This past year has been extremely crucial for Sega and they've come through in flying blue. But with the introduction of the PlayStation 2 and forthcoming systems from Nintendo and Microsoft generating excitement, Sega needs to cement their newfound roots and give their growing user base even more reason to stay true to Sega blue, before these potential storms cloud up their blue sky.

In an effort to reinforce the Dreamcast brand and its evolving technology, Sega held an Executive Games Summit in San Francisco, where they announced plans that would forcefully carry them and the Dreamcast through the next two years. But make no mistake: the life of the system will stretch well beyond 2002, as the information during the presentations made perfectly clear.

The first bit of good news is that sequels for many of Sega's exclusive titles are already in the works. Games like Crazy Taxi, Virtua Tennis (with the women's draw!), Jet Grind Radio, Samba de Amigo and Sonic Adventure are all returning in 2001, each greatly enhanced for the next Dreamcast evolution. On top of these favorites returning for another spin, Sega also unveiled a wide selection of original titles, two of which we reported on back in our July '99 issue when we spoke with Visual Concept's Greg Thomas. These two games, Floigan Brothers and Ooga Booga, are taking video games in a new direction. Ooga Booga will be the first action adventure game to run in parallel with Sega.Net, while Floigan Brothers will be the first episodic video game, with new episodes becoming available much like a comic book series via Sega.net.

These innovative titles were promptly backed by demonstrations of a new Dreamcast technology, ready and running on the Sega.Net servers. Dubbed "Dreamcall," the technology allows for users to plug in their Dreamcast microphones and communicate with opponents during an online game. The first game to incorporate this is Alien Front, and it will not only connect user audio from one DC to another, but will also allow DC users to challenge and trash talk users in the arcades. Imagine being dropped into a virtual New York City with seven other cabs talking trash in Crazy Taxi 2, or shredding the streets of Tokyoto with a slew of other skaters, knocking the paint cans out of rivals hands, or teaming up to cover more ground. The possibilities are staggering. The ability to hear and speak with other players throughout the network adds a whole new dimension to the fun and excitement of online gameplay. Sega is pioneering the online arena in a big way, paving the way for online gaming to transcend its current state.

While standard phones or cell phones are unable to dial in to call a DC, the Dreamcast can call traditional telephones at a reasonable rate. Even better, DC users can call other Dreamcast units for absolutely no charge, outside the monthly Sega.net rate. The interface is quite easy to navigate and the sound quality is sharp and unbroken. Best of all, the technology allows for constant two-way communication, like a real phone and not a CB radio.

During the talks, Sega also spoke about partnering with companies such as Motorola and having wireless connectivity with devices developed by several companies. This segued into speculation about the evolution of the Dreamcast unit itself. Apparently, Sega plans to reconfigure the guts of the DC and institute updated technology. Sega was vague but made representations that the system would evolve in its multimedia capabilities. What technology might be added is still all speculation, though we're sure many of you already have ideas. Either way, Sega has shown that they have no intention of standing still, but rather will grow and expand intelligently with the times, building a new Sega for a new Millennium. It's not about who's number one; it's about their customers and how to service them better. For our money, that is what makes a

Hoigal! I want to play a game! Squak
Hey, I want to get to the mailbox.
Well, natch. You're a genius. You know a lotta things I don't know.

FLOIGAN BROTHERS

From the creators of NFL 2K and NBA 2K series comes Floigan Brothers, an adventure game that relies on humor, puzzle solving and complex character interaction for its effect. Set in a junkyard, the game places you in the shoes of Moigal and Hoigal. These brothers are being run off their home by a developer who wants to tap the oil that flows underneath the junkyard. The brains of the bunch, Hoigal must be controlled throughout the game to teach Moigal how to overcome obstacles, allowing him to evolve in his abilities. The gameplay is unique, but the big leap is the episodical presentation: new levels can be downloaded periodically in an effort to give the game an ever-evolving feeling.

ALIENFRONT

Sometime in the future, the Earth is being invaded by the Triclops, a belligerent alien race. War is waged in combat vehicles called bio-mechs. Two-leg walkers, four-leg spiders or anti-gravity hovercraft can be commanded, armed with a typical arsenal of death stuff like missiles, grenades, and flames. In addition to destroying the opposition online—you can even compete against arcade users—you can talk trash or feed your teammembers information with real-time in-game voice.

HEADHUNTER

Footage of the action-adventure-racing game Headhunter has been floating around since E3 back in May, but Sega is finally revealing the true nature of this exciting game. As a Headhunter, a motorcycle-riding bounty hunter in the not-so-distant future, it's your job to enforce the peace and take down the lawless. Exploring the environments either on foot or on two wheels, you'll take part in what Sega says will be an episodic adventure complete with Hollywood-like cinematic storytelling. Yet Headhunter will also incorporate racing elements as you can race up to seven opponents online! How it all comes together should be interesting, but if these screens are any indication, Headhunter has tremendous potential.

BLACK AND WHITE

Following in the footsteps of classics like Populous, Black and White is an online strategy title that puts you in the role of an all-powerful god. From the heavens, it's your duty to guide your people, and it's up to you how you'll punish or protect them—be it for good or for evil. How you behave will determine the game's appearance: being a good god will result in a lush, happy landscape where you can manifest as a cuddly creature, while being an evil god will twist the world into a dark nightmare where you'll appear as a freakish monster. Players can even battle the gods of other tribes, with civilizations based on real ancient cultures.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

Yuji Naka and Sonic Team, which contains a handful of the original Phantasy Star creators, are putting the finishing touches on Phantasy Star Online, and the latest of what we've seen almost makes us forget it's been more than seven years since the last offering in Sega's classic RPG series. The look of the game is certainly not in question, but what about the online components? And will the single-player experience be pure and satisfying? So virginal is the exploration of online territory that clear answers probably won't arrive until the final game is in our hands in February.

Pictured above: HeadHunter (A-D) lets you go all Hollywood playing a bounty hunter who likes to race bikes and kick ass, Knight Rider meets Miami Vice. Next up (E,F) Black and White is set to knock creation-based gaming online on its ear and these shots, we're afraid, just don't do it justice. And lastly (G-J), PSO will change your life forever.

company number one. At the end of the two-day summit, we walked away with a brand new respect for the state of gaming and Sega. We were amazed at how much innovation is going on at Sega. The amount of information we are not yet allowed to report on is even more exciting than what we've revealed so far. At the risk of having a contract put out on us, all we can say is you ain't seen nuthin' yet. Chances are, if you can imagine it, Sega is doing it. Be sure that 2001 will be an incredible tug-of-war for your consumer dollars. And if you decide to spend your money on Sega, we're confident you won't be disappointed.

DAYTONA USA: NETWORK RACING

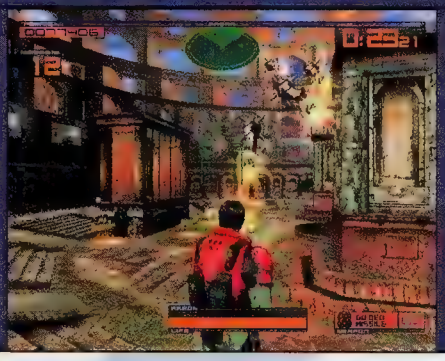
So it's not the conversion of Daytona 2 that many were hoping for or expecting, but we should be thankful that a Daytona has finally found its way to the Dreamcast, especially one with network capabilities. The aptly named Daytona USA: Network Racing allows up to four players to compete against each other online. Ten circuits will be available for racing, including three from the original Daytona, two from Championship Edition, and five completely new courses for the Dreamcast. Graphically, expect the best looking home version of Daytona yet, though how it compares to the Model 3 Daytona 2 remains to be seen. At the very least we should get a pop-up free view of the famous Sonic mountain.

18 WHEELER

It's always interesting how the Japanese can go after such a uniquely American institution as the 18 wheeler with such gusto. But that's just what they've done in 18 Wheeler: American Pro Trucker, the Dreamcast version of the very amusing arcade original. With its catchy blend of truck stop charm and fast, arcade bred gameplay, 18 Wheeler is almost impossible to play without a smile on your face. Your goal is to deliver cargo to a destination before your rival by any means necessary, using techniques like drafting other vehicles to boost your speed. And best of all, you will be able to play 18 Wheeler online against a friend.

AGARTHA

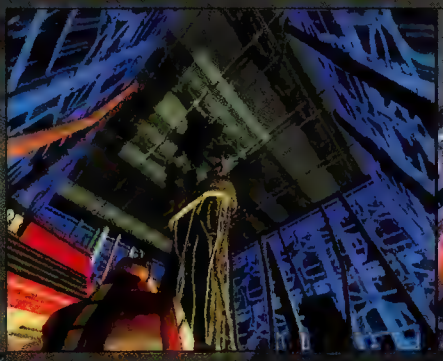
One of the most delightfully imaginative games in a long time, Toy Commander was the first Dreamcast effort from No Cliché, and now the talented Sega-owned developer is plunging into dark territory with the adventure-horror game Agartha. No Cliché is investing a tremendous effort into cultivating a rich and disturbing atmosphere, supported by a supremely interesting setting. In a tiny village in Romania, a city known as Agartha is discovered, a gateway to the underworld. You'll actually be able to choose between saving the pure of heart or aiding the demonic spirits. And devilishly commanding control is given to the main character, granting him freedom to kill anyone he chooses.

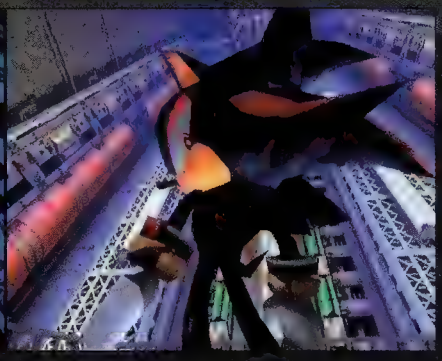


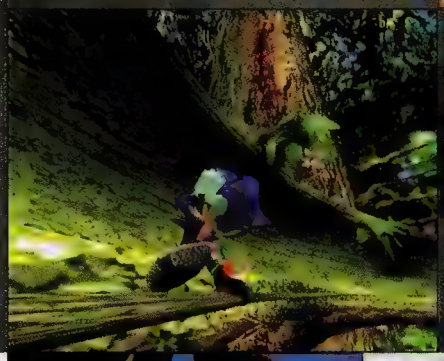
OUTTRIGGER

There is an alternative to Quake III Arena and Unreal Tournament for online shooting action. Sega's Outtrigger combines the speed and intensity of these games with smaller, more chaotic levels and even the option of playing in a third-person mode. Consider it a Japanese interpretation of the American FPS.

As with other SegaNet enabled games, up to four players can compete online, and you'll be able to enter chat rooms for further pontification on the finer points of blowing each other up. And in a nod to the PC games which inspired it, Outtrigger will support the Dreamcast mouse.

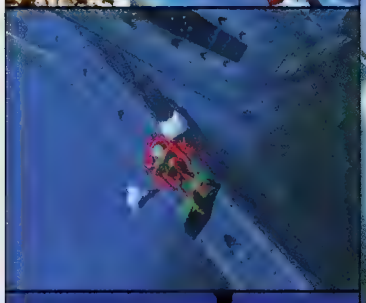


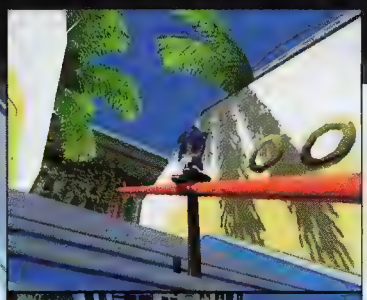


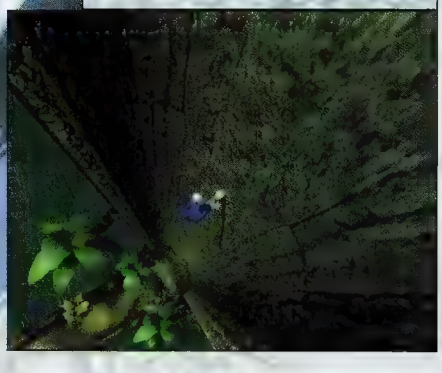


SONIC ADVENTURE 2

Okay, here's what we know about Sonic Adventure 2 so far. First, no bugs. SA2 will be a clean, mean, Sonic machine. Yuji Naka's had infinitely more time on this one, so fasten your seat belts and put your tray tables forward. The A-life Chaos will take on new life online, Sonic and Knuckles will be the main characters and SA2 will have gameplay more reminiscent of the 2D games. Sonic has a new move, too: he can grind on rails, Jet Grind style. The game is also said to be darker, taking on a more sinister ambience like in Sonic CD. The new dark Sonic pictured above (looks like a mecha Sonic skin job) will obviously play a key role in that respect. But whose side is he on? The story will unfold in real-time cinemas when we find out.







Speed Devils
ONLINE RACING

Attention, sinners. The most infernal arcade racer ever now runs online. All the hellish tracks, tricked out cars, and shady side bets from the original Speed Devils return – plus 11 new cars, and 21 new ways to put your hard-earned cash, car, and street rep on the line. Hey, leave the "legal" sports for those cornfed boys down the street. SegaNet just got itself a red light district.

SEGANET

ONLINE MULTI-PLAYER

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Dreamcast™

Ubi Soft ENTERTAINMENT

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THE HIGHWAY TO HELL NOW ONLINE.
ROUTE
666

GAMERS' REPUBLIC REVIEWS

GAMES REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

Domestic Reviews

102 Dalmations DC	D-
Banjo-Tooie N64	B
Blade PS	C+
Bugs and Taz PS	B-
Cannon Spike DC	B-
Chicken Run DC	C+
Dinosaur DC	C+
Donald Duck GQ PS2	B+
Donald Duck GQ DC	C+
Driver 2 PS	B-
Ducati PS	B-
The Grinch DC	F
King of Fighters Evo. DC	B
King of Fighters '99 PS	B
Kiss: Psycho Circus DC	B
Lunar 2 PS	A-
Max Steel DC	B+
Mickey's Speedway N64	C
Moto Racer WT PS	B
Ms. Pac-Man DC	B
Raycrisis PS	B-
Razor PS	B
Silent Scope DC	B-
Skies of Arcadia DC	A
Sonic Shuffle DC	C-
Super Bust-A-Move PS2	B
Surf Rocket Racers DC	B-
Tomb Raider Chronicles PS	B-
Top Gear Daredevil PS2	C+
Typing of the Dead DC	B

Import Reviews

Fist of the Northstar PS	B+

Sports Reviews

Fifa 2001 PS2	B+
HBO Boxing PS	C+
Knockout Kings 2001 PS	B
March Madness 2001 PS	B
PS Pro Beach VBall PS	B-
Q-Ball PS2	B
Ready2Rumble 2 PS	C-
Xtreme Sports DC	B

Handheld Reviews

Batman Beyond GBC	C
Dave Mirra BMX GBC	B-
Disney's Aladdin GBC	C+
Donkey Kong Country GBC	A
Emperor's New Groove GBC	F
Inspector Gadget GBC	C+
Jungle Book GBC	B
Powerpuff Girls GBC	F
X-Men GBC	D

GAME OF THE MONTH

Skies of Arcadia

developer/publisher: SEGA

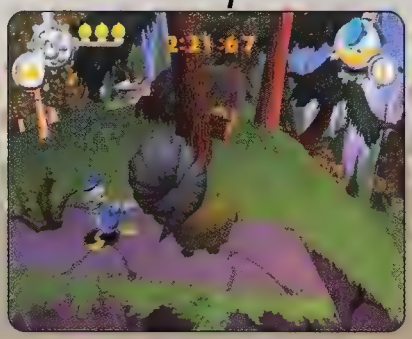
Sega's special brand of role-playing has returned. Skies of Arcadia succeeds on every level—story, soundtrack, character design, and gameplay

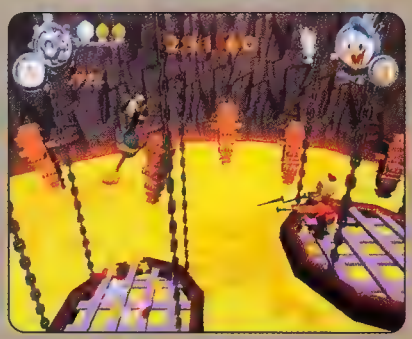
DONALD DUCK GOIN' QUACKERS

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Disney's most successful video-game personality sails again. Those Frenchies sure know how to make platformers

It's been awhile since a Disney franchise got the red-carpet treatment we grew so accustomed to back in the day, when Dave Perry and co. sat at Virgin Interactive dispensing memorable platformers like they were hot pretzels. Since, Disney's standards have dropped a bit, hitting an all-time low with Disney's Magical Racing, an abysmal kart racer that would have been better off if it never got out of the Magic Kingdom. Anyway, whoever appointed Ubi Soft sole proprietor of the latest Donald Duck games, the most sacred Disney character next to Mickey Mouse, was a wise man (or woman), because they have crafted a skillful, although somewhat short, platformer in a relatively short amount of time. While the N64 and Dreamcast versions rode on the Tonic Trouble/Rayman engine, I don't know where Ubi came up with a solid PS2 engine so fast, but nevertheless, they're set to deliver the first platformer for the system—and it's an impressive debut.





The PS2 game, while similar to the identical Dreamcast and Nintendo 64 versions in terms of overall design (which is basically Crash Bandicoot with a duck), is a completely different game. Although still on rails, the levels are wider and feel more open, the architecture is at times stunning, and the difficulty has been turned way up, taking into account the PS2's older and more seasoned user base. The result is a twitch gaming tour de force—platforming-by-the-numbers at its best—complete with a double jump that'll hearken you back to the days of 16-bit. Floating and/or disappearing platforms, timing stints, mad chases, and pattern-based bosses abound.

While the game's overall structure looks like it could have been achieved on Dreamcast (in fact, I can't figure out why they opted for the kids' version instead on DC), the Donald model itself is a step above the DC duck, and the animation is superb.

If you're in the market for a solid action-platformer, this one's kind of a no-brainer: the re-playability is made to order, the control is tight, the graphics are gorgeous, and it's brought to us by one of the most beloved teams in the industry. **GR**

- SUPERB ANIMATION
- GORGEOUS ENVIRONMENTS—GREAT LIGHTING
- PINPOINT ACCURATE CONTROLS
- IT'S TOO DAMN SHORT!

REPUBLIC SAYS... IF THIS GAME WAS TWICE AS LONG, I'D BE IN PLATFORMING HEAVEN. I DON'T KNOW HOW I'D GET THERE FROM SHOOTER HEAVEN, BUT I'M SURE I'D FIND IT.

B+

KING OF FIGHTERS EVOLUTION

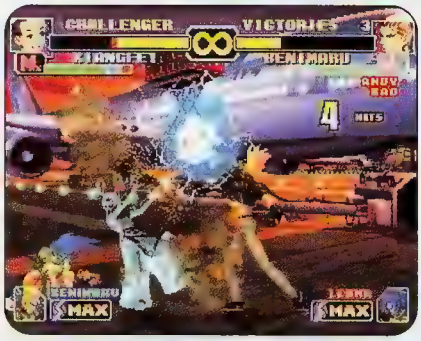
BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

SNK lives on as the world's most legendary fighters once again join forces for the ultimate martial arts tournament

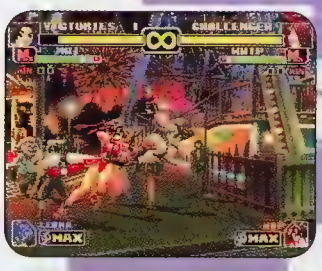
SNK may be gone in the U.S., but King of Fighters, thankfully, is living on thanks to Agetec. Superior in every way to the PlayStation version—or heck, even the arcade version—King of Fighters Evolution (based on KOF '99) takes the ever-popular team battle system and adds new characters, enhanced graphics, and even a fourth man to each team to deliver another strategic, action-packed, fun fighting experience.

As always, KOF's biggest strength is that it takes all of the greatest SNK fighters and tosses them into one game. Faves like Terry, Andy, Mai, Ryo, Robert, Yuri, Choi, Chang, Ralf, Clark and, of course, Iori and Kyo are all back, and new characters like K' (a character that fights suspiciously like Kyo), Bao (a gender-bending kid), and Jhun (northern kung fu artist extraordinaire) have been added, for a total of 33 warriors. Though the gameplay hasn't changed much from previous KOFs, teams are now comprised of four fighters each: three combatants and a "striker" who can be called in a limited number of times for assists. New to the DC version are several exclusive strikers, including two all new characters, Vanessa and Seth, plus MIA combatants like Billy Kane and Goro Daimon.

Drawing upon the Dreamcast's strengths, KOF's visuals have been given a nice upgrade. All the backgrounds have been redone in 3D, and while they aren't incredibly smooth, the effect of depth it adds is quite nice. Little extra animation details, like exploding fireworks, dripping rain, and planes flying past, add a lot to game's visual appeal, and the new carnival and clock tower stages are truly spectacular. Unfortunately, the character graphics haven't been enhanced (they look severely 32-bit), but the animation is still sweet and SNK's trademark wicked cool design still shines through.



Fans of the King of Fighters series will no doubt be pleased with this conversion. Evolution has tons of characters, a great soundtrack, smooth, responsive controls, and it's fun to play. The only real complaint is that it's still essentially the same game that we've been playing for years. But when you've got a fighter as rock-solid as KOF, does that matter? GR



- NEW FOUR-MAN FIGHTING TEAMS
- AWESOME 3D BACKGROUNDS
- NEO GEO POCKET SUPPORT HAS BEEN REMOVED
- CHARACTER SPRITES LOOK DATED

REPUBLIC SAYS... A SOLID 2D FIGHTER FROM THE MASTERS AT SNK, ENHANCED WITH NEW STRIKERS AND FANTASTIC BACKGROUNDS.

8

SURF ROCKET RACERS

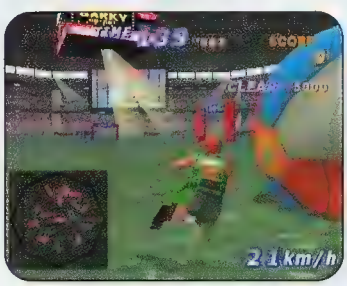
BY MIKE HOBBS

Four years on and Nintendo's Wave Race 64 is still the standard. CRI makes a good effort, but there's no comparison

This game's biggest stumbling block is a four year old piece of Nintendo software called Wave Race 64. Without that seminal effort, CRI's Surf Rocket Racers might be considered the best console jet ski game of all time.

However, this has less to do with the quality of the game, though it's fairly good, and more to do with the fact that no one has seriously attempted to make a jet ski racer on console (barring Vatical's Sea-Doo on PS) since Wave Race 64. I imagined that many developers would have jumped at the chance of using the Dreamcast's processing superiority to further evolve the incredible wave physics that Nintendo created for Wave Race. But for whatever reason, it's taken two years since the Dreamcast's Japanese debut before someone has attempted it (I completely discount Midway's utterly pointless Hydro Thunder).

CRI (actually a part of CSK, Sega's parent company) has taken up the mantle with Surf Rocket Racers, and as is often the case with CRI games, it's a solid, visually accomplished, professional effort that lacks that last touch of design skill to make it truly memorable.



At the heart of Surf Rocket Racers' ultimate failure, however, is Wave Race 64. You can't make a merely good game four years after a brilliant game on a technically inferior system has set the standard. It needs to be at least as good after such a span of time, and Surf Rocket Racers is nowhere near Wave Race.

This gulf is most prominently manifested in SRR's wave physics. To be sure, they're the best attempted on Dreamcast, but compared to that other game I keep mentioning, it's a weak approximation. And as I went back and played Wave Race to compare the two, I became convinced that there is some kind of black magic at work in the way that game feels, because you really get the sensation of riding waves in a way that just shouldn't be capable on that hardware.

If you think I'm being unfair to this game, keep in mind that the developers have had literally years to study Wave Race, and could have come a little closer than they did to capturing at least a morsel of that brilliance. I will say in Surf Rocket Racers' defense, however, that it is a decent jet-ski game if you have never in your life played Wave Race 64. **GR**

+ NICE-LOOKING GAME OVERALL + INTERESTING AND VARIED COURSE DESIGN	- WAVE PHYSICS CAN'T COMPARE TO WAVE RACE 64 - ANNOYING TIME SYSTEM

REPUBLIC SAYS... TAKEN IN ISOLATION, CRI'S SURF ROCKET RACERS WOULD PROBABLY SEEM BETTER AND CERTAINLY MORE ORIGINAL THAN IT DOES GOING UP AGAINST A FOUR YEAR OLD N64 GAME.

B-

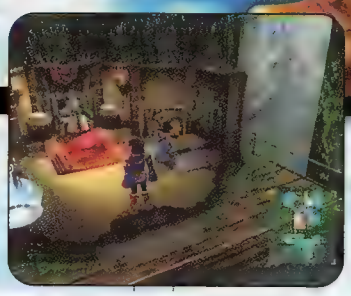
SKIES OF ARCADIA

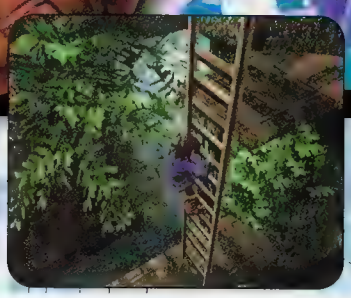
BY DAVE HALVERSON

Sega throw their hat back into the RPG ring with stunning results. Skies of Arcadia is a modern role-playing masterpiece

In the wake of the hype surrounding the PS2, the Sega Dreamcast is slowly engulfing its patrons with some of the finest RPGs ever created. An event the Sega faithful screamed for back when the Saturn was introduced, it has finally come to pass. Not only is Sega back, but they've brought their role-playing tradition with them. Before PSO redefines the category for a second time, we get to partake in Grandia II, a true diamond of an RPG, and Skies of Arcadia, a game equally as compelling but different in almost every way. Two diverse top-notch RPGs in the same month. Pinch me.

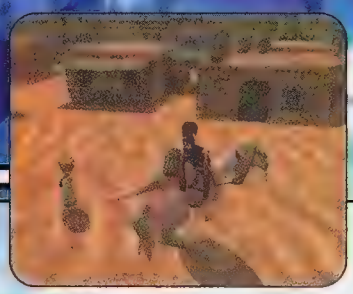
Skies draws much of its appeal from its cast of expressive characters. While the actual models aren't quite as detailed as those found in Grandia II, we get to know them on a more intimate level in a distinctly up-close-and-personal way—and these are characters you'll be glad to know. Vyse and Aika's adventure unfolds in such a way that you get the feeling you're along for the ride—an eyewitness to their struggle—and what a sweet ride it is. The story and writing in Skies are excellent, perhaps the best I've encountered. I'm not wild about the sporadic exclamations the characters verbalize to accent their sentences, but all is forgiven in this case.

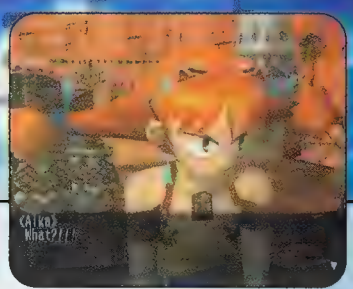




One of Skies best features is the character's vivid expressions, as you can see above and throughout these pages.

Looking into Skies' battle system, we find a complex yet simple-to-manage system based on moonstones—colored fragments that empower weapons. Certain colors correspond with certain powers and special moves, so depending on your surroundings, the idea is to equip and build up the elements best suited to take down that region's inhabitants; collecting moonberries that allow you to unlock special moves in battle is key. In order to fully equip your party and outfit them with the proper tools to deal with the game's spectacular bosses, it is necessary to search every vein in a given dungeon or labyrinth. You'll almost always discover weapons and armor indigenous to the environment you're investigating, along with the odd moonberry or expensive healing property. As a rule of thumb, the straightest and quickest route to each boss usually results in your quick demise. Nestled within each dungeon, Zelda-esque puzzles provide pleasant distractions. Uninterrupted by battles, they add diversity to the usual droll of the walk/fight element, and visually they are simply awe-inspiring. With the camera positioned to afford the maximum view, they are truly fantastic to behold, and grow steadily better as the adventure unfolds. With save points at the beginning of each dungeon (and most importantly, just before each boss confrontation), in case your strategy or party isn't quite up to snuff, you can re-equip and jump back into battle in a snap. This is especially helpful in Skies' innovative and heavily strategic air battles, which require a certain level of patience and wit.

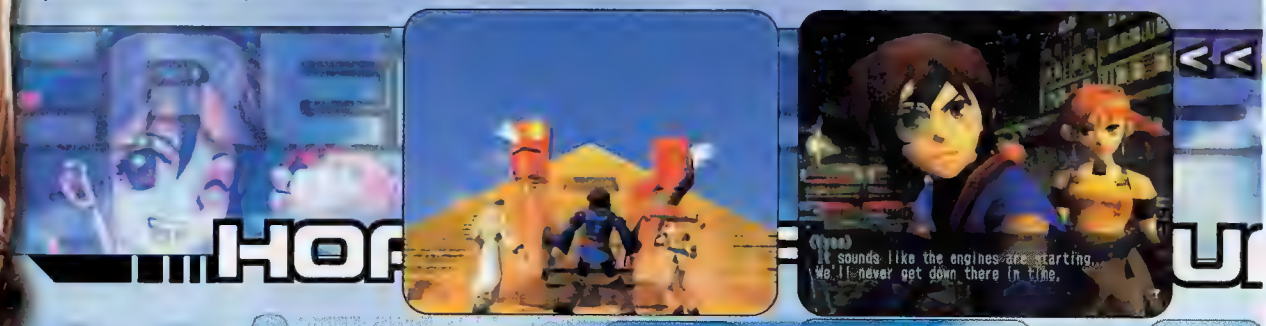




The architecture in Skies' towns, villages, and kingdoms are gorgeous and they grow steadily better as the game progresses. While they're not quite on par with Grandia II's, they are presented in such a way that they are as, if not more, compelling, filled with lively residents, from the odd dwelling to the shops and shadier establishments. Everyone you meet, from the lowlife's to the snooty rich folks have distinct personalities that come through both verbally and expressively, and as the story unfolds, you feel an uncanny connection with the broad range of heroes and villains.

Getting on with something I do not especially care for, you cannot see the enemies but instead are captured, FF style, into each battle. Thankfully, the game affords you generous space between battles, or this would drive me mad, especially seeing as how the battles unfold slowly, spinning into place for what seems like an eternity. And thankfully, you can usually run remarkably far before confrontations. In fact, a few times I found myself having to go back and trigger more in order to earn the money needed to outfit my party with the finest weapons and defenses. Also, as you become powered up, the battles lessen, so the walk/fight quotient, while not ideal, is never cause to see if your controller can fly.

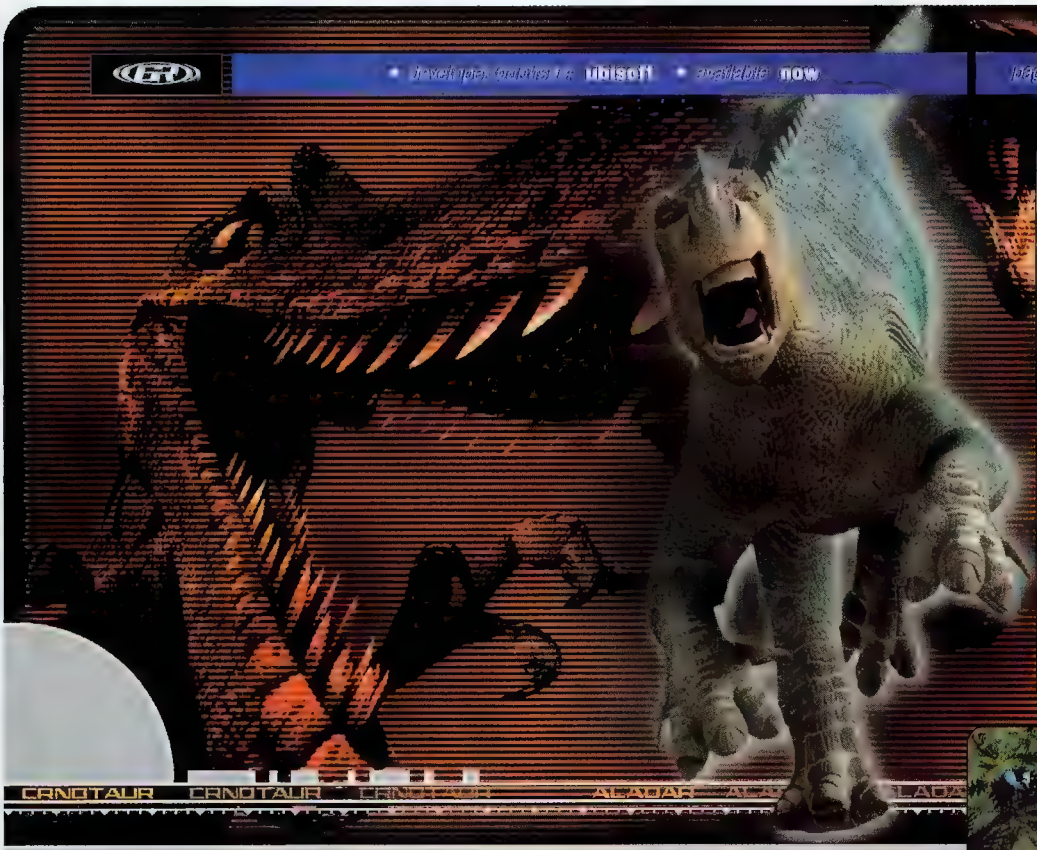
As important as any single RPG element, the music in Skies is masterful, to the point that it lifts the overall experience—reaching beyond the visual presentation to envelop you in its amazing world in the sky. Skies of Arcadia is a spectacular effort. In terms of pure gaming satisfaction for the old-school user, the Dreamcast is fast becoming a truly legendary platform. GR

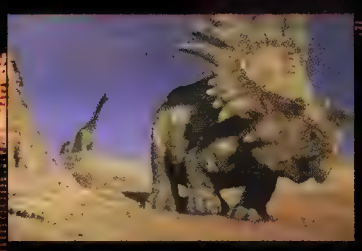


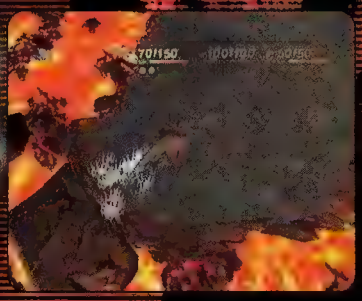
- ONE OF THE BEST STORIES I'VE ENCOUNTERED
- HIGHLY EXPRESSIVE AND INTERESTING CHARACTERS
- AIR BATTLES! GREAT MUSIC! THE COOLEST CITIES EVER!
- EXCELLENT WRITING THROUGHOUT AND... A PLOT TWIST!

REPUBLIC SAYS... SKIES IS EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS. THE DEEPER I GOT, THE MORE I LOVED IT. IT'S LONG BUT NEVER BORING, IS SIMPLY A MARVEL TO LOOK AT, AND THE STORY IS MOVIE QUALITY.

A







DINOSAUR

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Titanic top-down action for the masses. Ubi dress up their Dinosaur for its DC debut

After playing the PlayStation version of Dinosaur, I didn't hold out to much hope for the Dreamcast version. An overhead action game based on multi-tasking (and chatty) dinos, it seemed destined for the PS-to-Dreamcast cloning machine. Much to my amazement, however, Ubi Soft has actually taken the time to rig Dinosaur with some authentic Dreamcast attributes. Dreamcast kids get three additional missions, a real-time encyclopedia feature that allows them to catalog and then manipulate dinosaurs in 3D, high-resolution textures—including multi-textured skin and environments—skin deformation technology, and additional film clips from the asinine yet gorgeous feature film in which very large dinosaurs speak like rich English folks.

Undoubtedly a tough story to convert into a game, the design actually makes sense in relation to the material. While not an overly frenetic game by any stretch of the imagination, it's user-friendly enough to appeal to its core audience (which is mainly younger kids) and the odd Disney fan who must consume everything the magic kingdom churns out. Ubi has successfully integrated all of the characters who shared screen time into the adventure: Aladar the Iguanadon, Zini the Lemur, Flia the Pteranodon and all of the slacker dinos who couldn't keep up the pace. They must help each other in each movie-derived level, carrying out tasks until they all (along with any stragglers) reach safety. Along the way each character levels up RPG style, adding a

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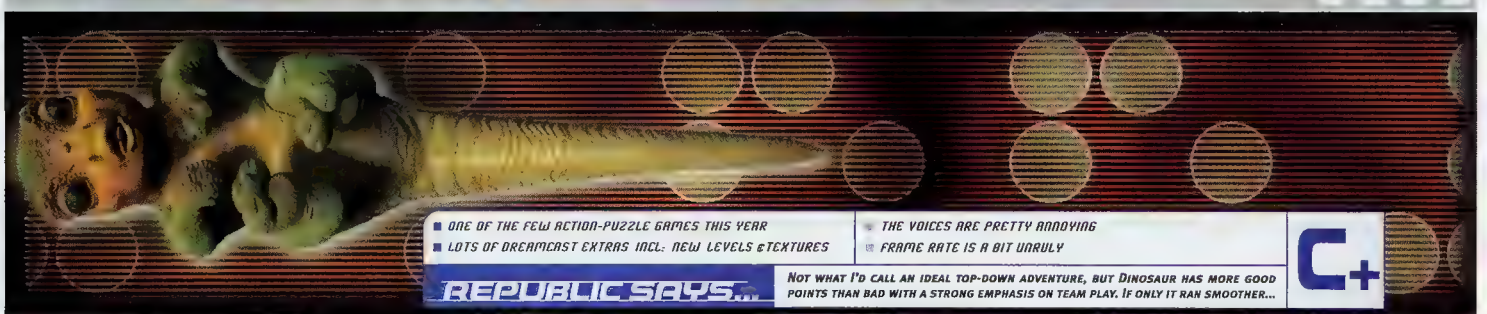


- ONE OF THE FEW ACTION-PUZZLE GAMES THIS YEAR
- LOTS OF DREAMCAST EXTRAS INCL. NEW LEVELS & TEXTURES
- THE VOICES ARE PRETTY ANNOYING
- FRAME RATE IS A BIT UNRULY

REPUBLIC SAYS... NOT WHAT I'D CALL AN IDEAL TOP-DOWN ADVENTURE, BUT DINOSAUR HAS MORE GOOD POINTS THAN BAD WITH A STRONG EMPHASIS ON TEAM PLAY. IF ONLY IT RAN SMOOTHER...

C+

MAX STEEL

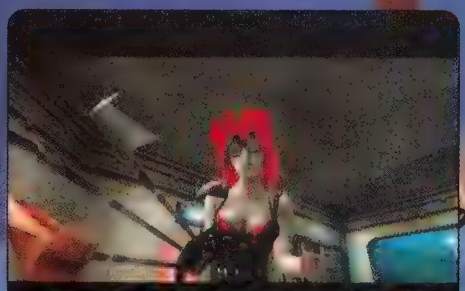
BY DAVE HALVERSON

Get out your Nano Probes and Transphasik Generators. Max Steel is coming to the Dreamcast! Those Dread are dead!

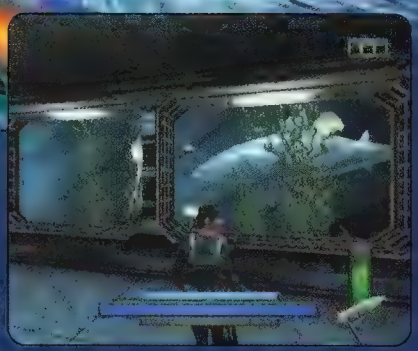
We live in a strange world. Mattel's Max Steel Covert Missions, based on the CG-rendered Saturday morning toon on the Kids WB—check your local listings—gets the red-carpet treatment, while the Grinch, which is on track to gross well over 200 million (and features a real actor) gets a shoddy pile of steaming poo. Seeing as how I fill my TiVo solely with *South Park* episodes and Saturday morning TV, I couldn't be happier. As for the Grinch—maybe next time.

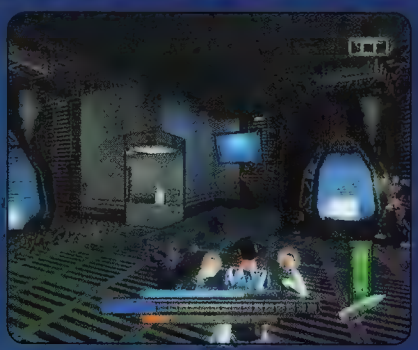
Mattel did two very smart things when they set out to turn Max Steel into a video game: they decided to make it a dedicated Dreamcast game instead of exploiting it over several platforms, and commissioned Treyarch and their willing Draconus engine to build it—the combination of which has culminated in one kick-ass Dreamcast exclusive.

Picking up where they left off with their impressive first Dreamcast effort, Draconus, Treyarch has added quite a bit of polish to their engine. They remain the texture kings (man, this game looks great). The control and character animation have been refined, and the gameplay benefits from a bevy of new play mechanics. Max has all sorts of gizmos at his disposal—guns, self-detonating mines, grenades, noisemakers, pulse zappers; if it hurts Dread scum, Max can use it. He can also perform a sideways roll, a back flip, perform several kicks and punches, crawl through tight spaces, and hoist himself up on any plateau he can reach. The only thing Max doesn't have is a strafe. I guess when you're the world's only Nano-Tek-enhanced human, you don't need one. Max's turbo and stealth get him through what the other stuff can't, but as any Max fan worth his steel knows, they are limited. Through a bio link in Max's skin, his confidant, Dr. Roberto (Berto) Martinez, is in constant communique, cuing Max in on weapon



Treyarch is fast becoming known for their detailed in-game models. The game benefits with real-time cinemas that meld seamlessly into the gameplay.





usage, and the shapely Rachel Leeds keeps Max abreast (ahem) of each situation at hand.

As one would imagine, Max Steel is mission-based and follows storylines based on a chain of events revolving around N-TEK and its battle against its arch nemesis, the evil Dread organization, and its leaders, John Dread, Psycho, and L'etranger. Although the gameplay is fairly straightforward, with the requisite shooting, fighting, jumping, climbing, timing maneuvers, stacking, taking out security cams, etc., gobbling up the action, the game is doused with enough exploration, puzzle solving, switch throwing, and item-based events to form a complete and very satisfying overall experience. The locales, like an underwater fortress laden with outer elevators, high-tech factories, and mountain strongholds, are spectacular, with architecture that out-fi's most big screen sci-fi, and the solid and nicely designed in-game models (another Treyarch staple) help drive it all home in high style. Max Steel is one of the best-looking games on the Dreamcast, period. Leaving nothing to chance, the music, and especially the sound effects, are exceptional, too. When a chain- link fence goes down, it sounds like you're back in the school yard scaling the fence to cut class. Treyarch has aso wisely included a difficulty setting, a rarity these days with so much rush development going on, so you can tailor a game to your experience level. This is especially good for Max's younger fan base.

Max's incredible graphics, great license, and Johnny Quest-meets-Solid Snake theme will grab you and the deep gameplay and well-designed and -executed levels will keep you glued to your chair. Max Steel is yet another must-have Dreamcast exclusive. GR

- EXTREMELY WELL THOUGHT OUT AND PUT TOGETHER
- GORGEOUS TEXTURES AND IN-GAME MODELS
- MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS ARE EXCELLENT
- STRONG CHARACTERS AND STORY FROM THE TV SHOW

REPUBLIC SAYS... THIS ONE IS A NO-BRAINER. IF YOU OWN A DREAMCAST AND LIKE MISSION-BASED ACTION-ADVENTURE, THEN YOU SIMPLY MUST PLAY MAX STEEL.

B

KISS PYSCHO CIRCUS

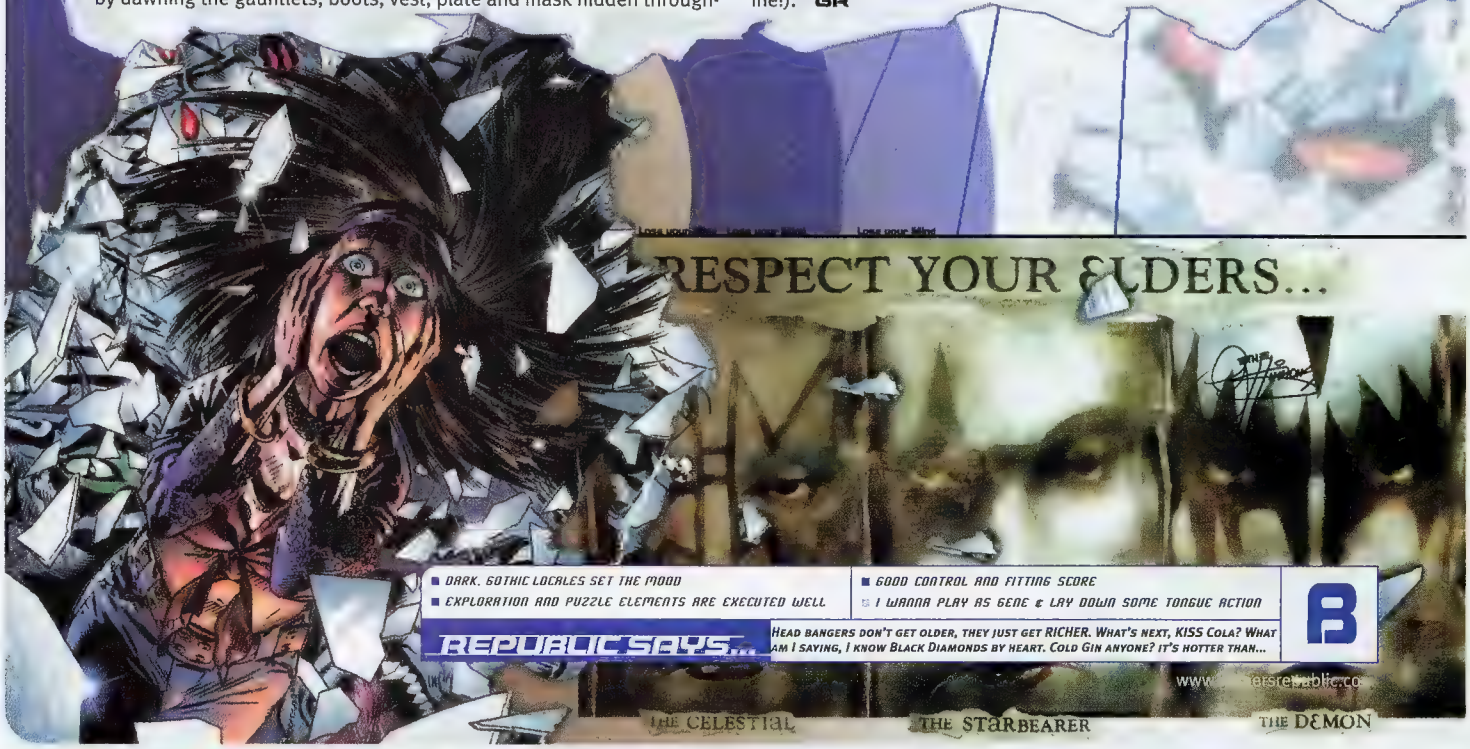
BY DAVE HALVERSON

KISS continue to seep into American pop culture, and these golden boys show no signs of fading—all dressed up and everywhere to go

Before the introduction of the Dreamcast, the last mood-inducing FPS I'd encountered was Doom II on the PlayStation. It was just about that time I began to become enamored with the breed which, as fate would have it, would soon be reduced to a series of lifeless frag-fests devoid of story, puzzle elements, ambience and everything that made the genre thrive. While I'm not the biggest fan of first-person shooters, these days Maken X and now Kiss Psycho Circus: The Nightmare Child have begun to rekindle my interests. Based on characters from the Todd McFarlane comic books, Psycho Circus is much like Doom and the original Quake, fraught with switches and hidden walls, evil and diabolical overtones achieved through music and character design, highly Goth landscapes, and a truly wicked assortment of weaponry. Where it rises above the norm is in the area of character development and play mechanics, although it doesn't take much to innovate here, because these games rarely have any to speak of anyway.

Each world begins with its subject, a mere mortal patterned after a member of Kiss. As you roam each nightmare, you need to assemble the Elder's Armor, transforming your mortal alter ego into a sort of demigod by dawning the gauntlets, boots, vest, plate and mask hidden throughout. Once the four have emerged victorious in their separate quests, they will form into one to battle the Nightmare King. Besides the usual— dark layered scrolling skies, minions of evil monsters, puzzle solving and platforming—Psycho Circus includes the use of a whip (Kisslevania!) that adds a great dynamic to the game and plays host to an array of extremely clever, usually disturbing overlords and bosses, not to mention some truly unforgettable architecture and level design. As for the essentials, clipping is kept to a bare minimum and, although the frame rate does chug when displaying an ungodly amount of enemies and structures, it maintains a smooth 30 most of the time. There are a few bugs creeping about as well, but nothing to go all psycho over. And while some are miffed by the lack of online compatibility, I welcome its absence; a game should be one or the other so that neither suffers.

Psycho Circus picks up where games like Doom and Quake left off, bringing with it a dark comic-book universe, unique character designs, and great playability—for one player. The real crime is that Take 2 never released Dreamcast versions for preview or review to the press. This review comes months after the game's release and I had to buy it (imagine!). GR



- DARK, GOTHIC LOCALES SET THE MOOD
- EXPLORATION AND PUZZLE ELEMENTS ARE EXECUTED WELL
- GOOD CONTROL AND FITTING SCORE
- I WANNA PLAY AS GENE & LAY DOWN SOME TONGUE ACTION

REPUBLIC SAYS... HEAD BANGERS DON'T GET OLDER, THEY JUST GET RICHER. WHAT'S NEXT, KISS COLA? WHAT AM I SAYING, I KNOW BLACK DIAMONDS BY HEART. COLD GIN ANYONE? IT'S HOTTER THAN...

B

www.starsrepublic.com

BLADE

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

Dark and edgy, Marvel's sharp superhero comes to PlayStation, but it's only enjoyable to a point

Blade, in many regards, seems very inspired. Running through blood-splattered hallways, lined with corpses and illuminated only by the dimmest torch flicker; fearing for your life as a 12-foot tall beast-like monstrosity bursts through a brick wall and uses its decaying yet razor-sharp claws to slice through flesh; jumping with surprise as a vampiric assassin emerges from an unseen crevice—all are moments where you'll realize that the team behind Blade took great care to recreate the character's comic book-inspired dark surroundings and decidedly horrific atmosphere. The environments, despite their shadow-drenched nature, are detailed and well-constructed, with realistic textures of a sinister cityscape peeking out from the gloom as well as they can in any PS game. The main character is well-modeled, and unsettling music and quality voice acting further set the stage for undead thrills.

However, despite this chilling setup, Blade fails to make the cut as a solid action-adventure. Simply put, the gameplay is uninteresting. Play is basically limited to killing enemies and solving simple puzzles (get key, hit switch). The levels are long and quite challenging, but there's really little of interest to do, and the slice-shoot action is devoid of advanced techniques. Blade can't even use some of the most basic adventuring moves, like pulling himself up on ledges. To make matters worse, the engine is riddled with numerous annoying flaws. The frame rate is choppy at times, the shift from behind-the-back to a fixed overhead camera is discomforting, the inventory is way too limited, and the save system is frustrating: you can only use a save point once. The addition of a look button and assignment of the strafing keys to the shoulder triggers would have helped immensely, too.

The result is a game that's atmospheric but strictly average when it comes to gameplay. If you got into games like Nightmare Creatures 2, then you'll want to give Blade a try, but otherwise it might not be worth taking a stab at. GR

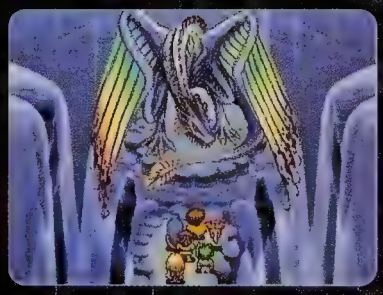
FANTASTICALLY DARK, UNSETTLING ATMOSPHERE PROVIDES A HEFTY CHALLENGE	TEDIOUS, REPETITIVE GAMEPLAY THE CHARACTERS SURE DON'T HAVE MANY MOVES

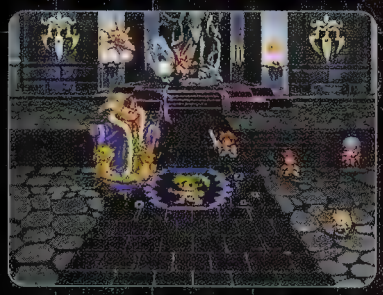
REPUBLIC SAYS... A LITTLE MORE CONTROL AND A LOT MORE VARIETY WOULD HAVE HELPED MAKE THE PLAY AS GOOD AS THE ATMOSPHERE. AND WHERE THE HELL'S WESLEY SNIPES?

C+

LUNAR 2 ETERNAL BLUE COMPLETE

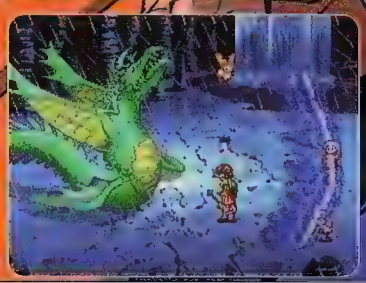
BY CHRIS HOFFMAN



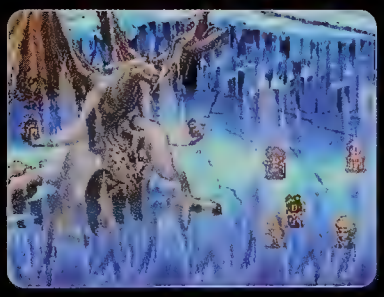


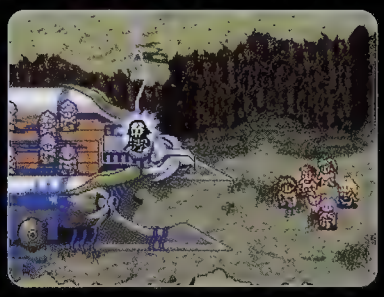
When Lunar: Eternal Blue first hit the Sega CD back in 1995, it left RPG fans spellbound. Sweeping players into the fantastic world of Lunar for the second time, Eternal Blue was a game that managed to be both epic and endearing, dramatic and lighthearted, stirring with its visuals as well as its gameplay. Now the classic is back on PlayStation as Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete, and this unforgettable RPG experience is ready to mesmerize fans of the original and legions of new gamers with its charm, humor, and fantastic presentation.

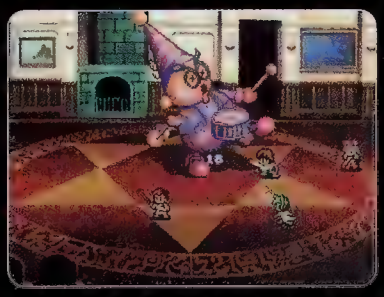
At the heart of Lunar 2's appeal are its characters. Hiro, the star of the game, is an adventurous young man whose life is forever changed when he encounters Lucia, the beautiful and enigmatic girl who has come from the Blue Star. Captivated by Lucia's radiance, Hiro eagerly agrees to help her on her mission to find Althena, the goddess of Lunar. Accompanied by Hiro's smart-aleck sidekick, a flying pink kitty named Ruby, the two encounter some of the most memorable characters ever found in an RPG: Ronfar, the priest turned gambler; Jean, a dancer with a troubled past; Lemina, a magician whose greedy ways conceal her kind heart; and White Knight Leo of Althena's Guard, the most noble character ever created for a video game.



1000 years after Dragonmaster Alex defeated the Magic Emperor, a new threat emerges on the Silver Star. In the darkest hour, hope springs eternal...



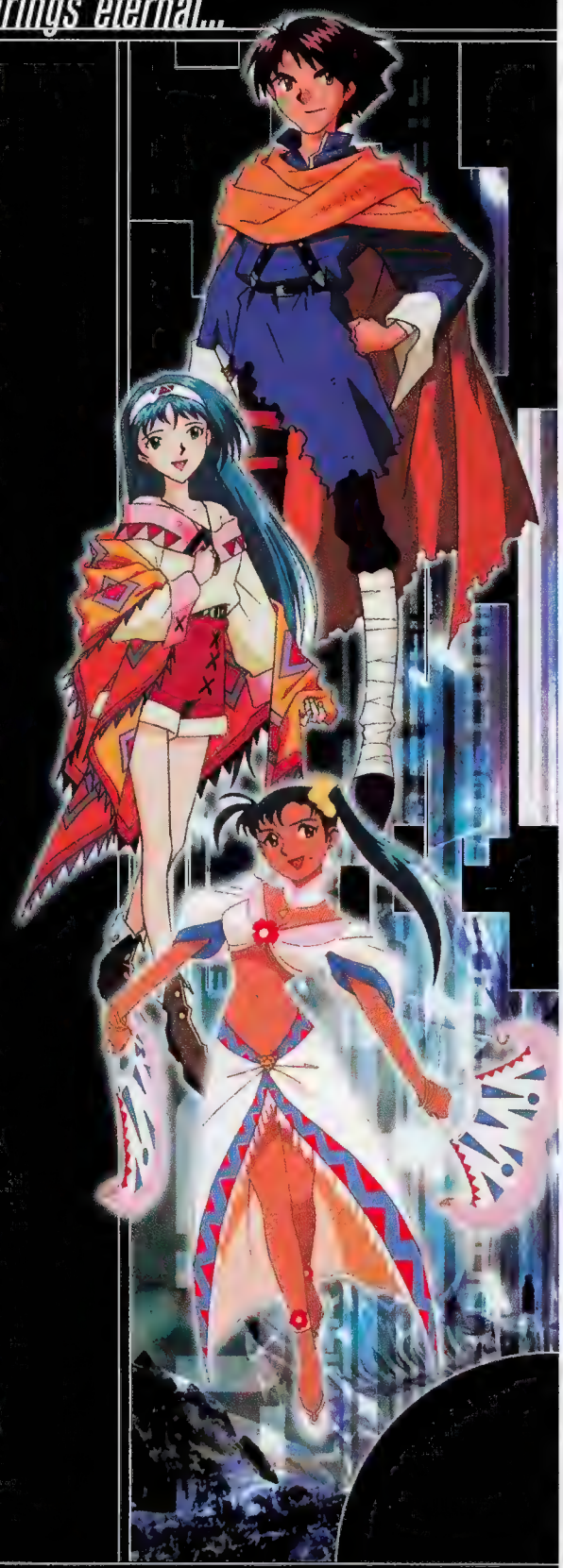




The grand adventure takes Hiro, Lucia and their companions from one end of the Silver Star to the other, from desert ruins to haunted houses to snowy peaks and maybe a bathing hole or two. The journey even takes the heroes to locales from Lunar: Silver Star Story, complete with characters that are guaranteed to leave a warm, fuzzy feeling for fans of the original. Challenges come from not only wild monsters and Althena's Guard, which believes Lucia to be a force of destruction, but also from the characters' personal tribulations. Seeing Lucia evolve from a naive outsider to a compassionate individual, watching Ronfar face the fears of his past, and struggling with Leo as his senses of duty and justice collide draws players in and evokes emotion like only the best RPGs are able to.

Complimenting the magical story are the rich hand-drawn visuals. Those who don't appreciate the beautiful majesty of 2D graphics may scoff at the old-school appearance of Lunar 2, but the detailed, brilliantly colorful characters and backgrounds are both pleasant and charming. Even better are the excellent anime cutscenes. Much like in Lunar: SSS, the game's key moments are rendered as glorious animation that combines traditional cel art with nice CG. Though you'll notice the compression and pixel crawl, you'll still long for more.

Musically, Lunar 2 is a treat. Generally upbeat and whimsical, the tunes are catchy enough to keep you humming (or singing, in the case of the great ending songs) well after you've turned off your PlayStation. Top-notch voice acting and sound effects also soothe the ears. Lucia's mysterious, innocent nature is captured especially well, and the way her voice sounds more human as she develops as a character is a nice touch. Hiro and Leo, with their voices sounding appropriately adventurous and heroic, respectively, are all also notably good. Borgan and Lunn are a bit cheesy, and a



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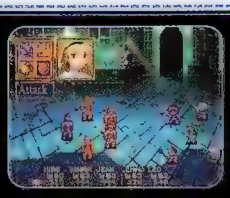
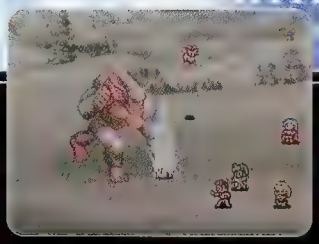
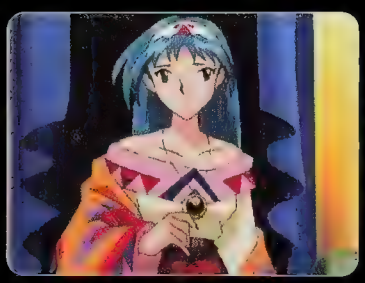


As the above screenshots show, the PlayStation version (right) of Lunar: Eternal Blue is far more rich and vibrant than the Sega CD original (left). It's amazing how much has been enhanced, but surprising how things have been cut—the most notable being when Hiro is nearly terminated and then revived thanks to the magical powers of the Blue Spire (left), a scene only on Sega CD.





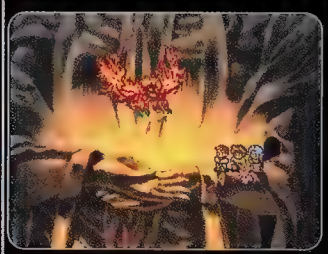
newcomers won't notice, diehards will miss the perfectly crafted mazes of the ice caves, the dragon lairs, and especially the final dungeon. A few story elements have even been removed, making this version less Complete than you'd expect.

However, I can't complain about the numerous enhancements made over the Japanese version of Lunar 2. You can now store up to 30 save files on one memory card (compared to three in Japan), the video resolution of the animated scenes has been improved, extra vocal sequences have been put in, and annoying music slowdown has been removed, for instance. Having played through the Japanese version, believe me when I say that little touches like this make all the difference.

I'm still undecided whether Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete is better than the Sega CD original, whether the gorgeous cutscenes, new play elements and enhanced sensory experience make up for the easier dungeons and streamlined story. But I'm positive that Lunar 2 is a fantastic game either way. The gameplay, story, music, characters and visuals come together in a game that can only be described as a magical RPG (and Working Designs' awesome packaging and extra goodies don't hurt either). If you missed Lunar 2 the first time around, don't let it happen again. **GR**

few of the cries in battle are extremely strange ("Let's kick it up a notch!" and "Taste my refreshment!" for example), but at least you can turn those off.

For those long-time Lunar fans who have been with the series since the Sega CD days, the question is, "How does it stack up with the original?" Surprisingly it's not as clear-cut as you'd expect. The PS version is enhanced in many ways: the pay-per-save and magic upgrade system are gone, the writing is perfected, the inventory system is enhanced, random battles have been replaced by visible enemies, and an awesome crest system for augmenting characters' abilities adds loads of depth to gameplay. The severe difficulty has also been tweaked to near perfection—but at a price. The phenomenal dungeon design that was so good on the Sega CD has been sacrificed in favor of making the game more user-friendly, and while



CREST QUEST

The big gameplay innovation in Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete is the new crest system for granting or enhancing abilities. By equipping certain combinations you can unlock even greater powers. Try the Healing Crest with Magic Eye to absorb enemy HP, Warrior Crest with Mind Crest for attack +30 (but low speed), or Shiro Crest and Chiro Crest to get a range of 200!

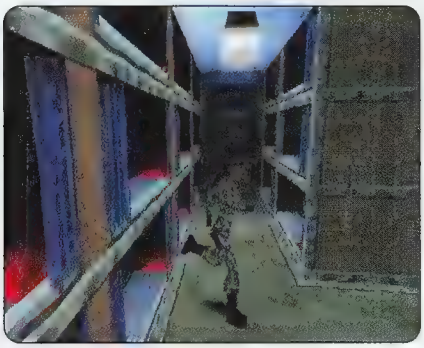
- FANTASTIC STORY WITH UNFORGETABLE CHARACTERS
- ANIME CUTSCENES PUNCTUATE THE ADVENTURE
- THE ENDING WILL BRING A TEAR TO YOUR EYE
- SOME ELEMENTS MISSING COMPARED TO SEGA CD VERSION

REPUBLIC SAYS... I PLAYED THE SEGA CD VERSION, THE JAPANESE VERSION, WROTE THE PREVIEW AND THE REVIEW AND YOU KNOW WHAT? I STILL LOVE TO PLAY THIS GAME.

A-

TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES

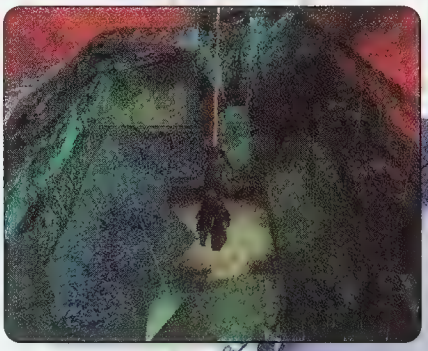
BY BRADY FIECHTER



And once again, Miss Croft jumps and climbs and shoots and raids and swims to reach the diamond in the rough

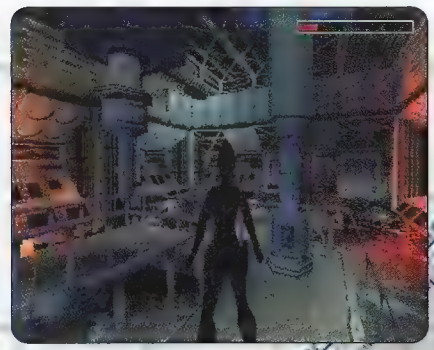
This may be the fatigued Lara Croft's fifth adventure in five years, but there's just enough life left in her to keep the Tomb Raider spirit flowing. Something about this series still manages to crawl under my skin—that engrossing sense of adventure and reliance on sprawling exploration and subdued mystery. All it takes is the airy seduction of the opening theme music to spark my enthusiasm for yet another search for some mystical artifact in some exotic locale.

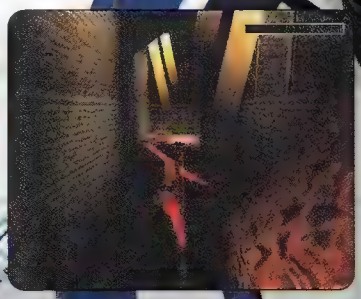
Opening the story of Tomb Raider Chronicles is a superbly produced CG sequence that leads to acquaintances of Lara discussing her presumed death. Memories of Lara's past are recalled, setting up the first of four chapters that cover different periods of her life. The first chapter takes place in Rome; the second chapter in a Russian nuclear submarine; the third chapter follows a young Lara on her first adventure in a ghost-infested Ireland; and the final chapter shows us a high-tech Lara cloaked in black, skin-tight spy gear sneaking through a sterile high-rise.



As strained as this engine has become on PlayStation, the look of the game is still widely engrossing, relying on compelling settings and atmospheric lighting for great effect. Outdoor areas tend to show the biggest visual holes; the angular Tomb Raider visual aesthetic still lingers. But as every good Tomb Raider fan can attest, the sense of mystery and subdued tone is so strong that even the most clunky design seems to come alive.

Here's the deal: Tomb Raider Chronicles is not for the anti-Lara Croft crowd, and it's practically a quarter the size of the last adventure, and it's more of the same. Which is just good enough for this Tomb Raider fan. GR





- I STILL LOVE THIS GAMEPLAY
- FANTASTIC CG. SUPERBLY VOICED
- BIG ON ADVENTURE; ATMOSPHERE DOMINATES
- SLOPPY AND UNDERDEVELOPED

REPUBLICSAYS... LESS COMPLEX THAN PAST GAMES IN THE SERIES, THIS LASTEST TOMB RAIDER IS FAMILIAR BUT SATISFYING. THE FORMULA STILL WORKS.

B-

DRIVER 2

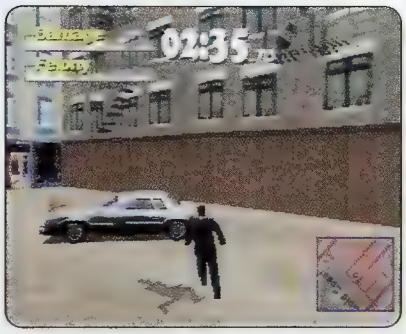
BY TOM STRATTON

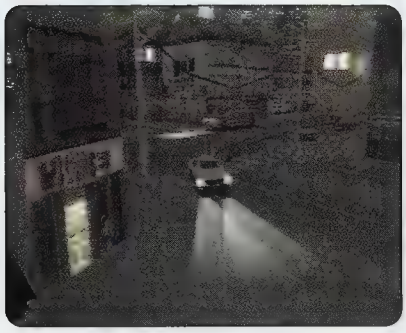
If any game was to push the PlayStation hardware to meltdown, it's Driver 2. It's a shame it isn't on a 128-bit system

Driver is easily one of the best games the PlayStation library holds, and I believe that it is the only adventure game that uses cars to drive the story. I'm not sure if that holds any importance in the grand scheme of things, but its concept is one that, if not executed with extreme precision, could have resulted in disaster. But with Driver, the opposite holds true, so before I go on any longer, I should stop to recommend placing it on your list of games to pick up. And after playing the sequel through to the end, despite its flaws, I feel more than comfortable recommending Driver 2 as well.

What ultimately attracted me to the game is the graphics—some cleverly blended organic textures and high poly models in not only the environments, but also the vehicles. Add weather effects like rain, complete with slick, reflecting roads, and I was impressed. Now this appreciation comes with a bit of the realization that I may be in the minority with my opinion, and I would understand why.

Which is why it's important for me to address some evident shortcomings. Most important, the frame rate. At times the game pauses for nearly a second—bad enough that, when it happened the first time, I was about to get up and press reset. Soon I learned this will happen in isolated areas where the system is trying to display all the mayhem going on onscreen while streaming certain portions of the city. The average frame rate lies at about 14 frames a second, with constant flux and severe draw-in. Of course, these





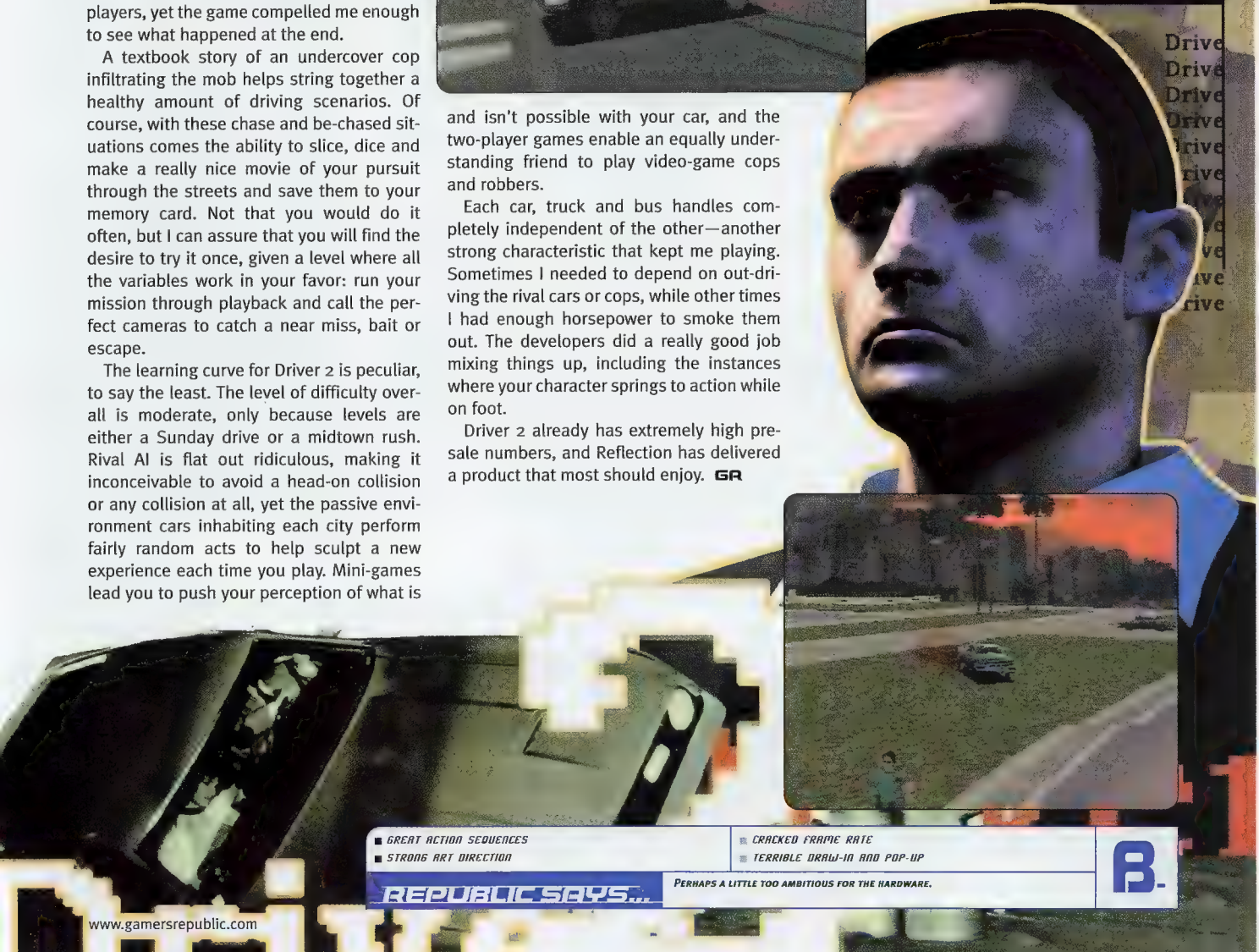
problems are so detrimental to graphical impact that they'll probably disappoint players, yet the game compelled me enough to see what happened at the end.

A textbook story of an undercover cop infiltrating the mob helps string together a healthy amount of driving scenarios. Of course, with these chase and be-chased situations comes the ability to slice, dice and make a really nice movie of your pursuit through the streets and save them to your memory card. Not that you would do it often, but I can assure that you will find the desire to try it once, given a level where all the variables work in your favor: run your mission through playback and call the perfect cameras to catch a near miss, bait or escape.

The learning curve for Driver 2 is peculiar, to say the least. The level of difficulty overall is moderate, only because levels are either a Sunday drive or a midtown rush. Rival AI is flat out ridiculous, making it inconceivable to avoid a head-on collision or any collision at all, yet the passive environment cars inhabiting each city perform fairly random acts to help sculpt a new experience each time you play. Mini-games lead you to push your perception of what is and isn't possible with your car, and the two-player games enable an equally understanding friend to play video-game cops and robbers.

Each car, truck and bus handles completely independent of the other—another strong characteristic that kept me playing. Sometimes I needed to depend on out-driving the rival cars or cops, while other times I had enough horsepower to smoke them out. The developers did a really good job mixing things up, including the instances where your character springs to action while on foot.

Driver 2 already has extremely high presale numbers, and Reflection has delivered a product that most should enjoy. **GR**



- GREAT ACTION SEQUENCES
- STRONG ART DIRECTION
- CRACKED FRAME RATE
- TERRIBLE DRAW-IN AND POP-UP

REPUBLIC SAYS... PERHAPS A LITTLE TOO AMBITIOUS FOR THE HARDWARE.

B-

2001 MOTOCROSS SHOOTOUT

BY DAVE HALVERSON

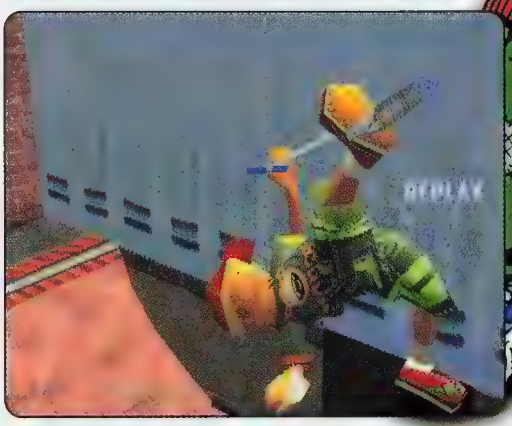
'Tis the season to get dirty. Question is, which one's most worthy? EA and THQ send the PS packin' with two more MX'ers in tow

Spectacular rider animation, realistic terrain, and sophisticated bike models are still missing in today's motocross games, but these are limited only by hardware. With the new era of consoles approaching and game designers already having a firm grasp on how these games should play, the future looks bright for video games based on one of the world's greatest speed thrills, professional motocross.

There are two new motocross games on the scene for Christmas 2000, and while another 989 entry will be sorely missed after an excellent showing last year, both push the PlayStation to its limit. Let's begin with EA's update of last year's physics-heavy Supercross 2000, Supercross 2001. Taking over as the best stadium-based console motocross game available to date, Supercross 2001 boasts refined controls and physics which, combined with EA's power clutch and air-turn play mechanics, elevate the gameplay beyond a mere steering exercise. This additional level of depth requires the player to actually master the ebb and flow of each perfectly replicated venue. Clearing the triples or reaching max speed through the whoops is never simply a matter of choosing the right line but distributing torque to the rear wheel via the clutch at just the right moment. Great stuff. The rider animation, sound effects, and commentary have been perfected as well. As for features, well, it's EA, so expect the kitchen sink—plus freestyle. Tricks are a snap to pull off, the replays are respectable, and, if you can't find a pro to your liking, the game has a cool create-a-rider feature. If supercross is your bag, this is the complete package for 2001. Things tend to fall apart when the game ventures outdoors. SC 2001's sole detractor.

Those looking for a more straightforward Motocross game, or who prefer predominantly outdoor venues, will want to fly the new Championship Motocross 2001 Starring Ricky Carmichael. While it still feels more like an arcade game than a simulation, refinements for 2001 include better balance, career mode, much-improved rider animation and cycle models, and more ear-bleeding alt rock than you can shake a boy band at. Perhaps the best new addition, however, is the added depth supplied by the ability to spend your earnings on upgrades such as pipes, sprockets, tires, and performance-enhancing fuel. There's also a create-a-rider mode in career which features stylish gear from O'Neal, Fox, Thor, Shift, and AXO; a deep assortment of official teams and riders; and Funcom's amazing PS engine screams even louder than last year. This is the game to own if you like outdoor racing. The balance is set on the difficult side, but it's really about tweaking your bike correctly for each track, so this year it's a welcome addition rather than a problem. As a deep arcade-style racer, RC 2001 succeeds in every way. It's a shame the first PS2 version of the game isn't in Funcom's hands. Pacific Light and Power, who murdered Road Rash, has a lot to live up to. **GR**

Supercross 2001–B
RC 2001–B+



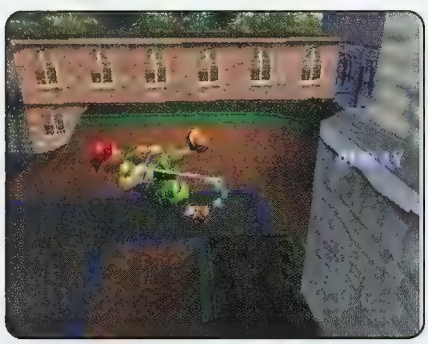
RAZOR FREESTYLE SCOOTER

BY DAVE HALVERSON

After you crack your head riding one of these things, take a load off and play the game—it's a hell'uva lot safer!

Razor scooters: whether they're a passing fad or about to become as commonplace as the bicycle, they are popping out of China faster than herb tea, and helping to fill up emergency rooms nationwide. It's no shocker that a video game would follow, but for one to arrive in such a timely manner, development had to have started at least a year ago. Someone had a pretty good idea of where this thing was going. Whomever's premonition Razor was, it's about to pay off, because not only is this game ultra-right-on-time, it's actually very good. In fact, I don't know that it could have been done any better. Shaba Games? Who are they?

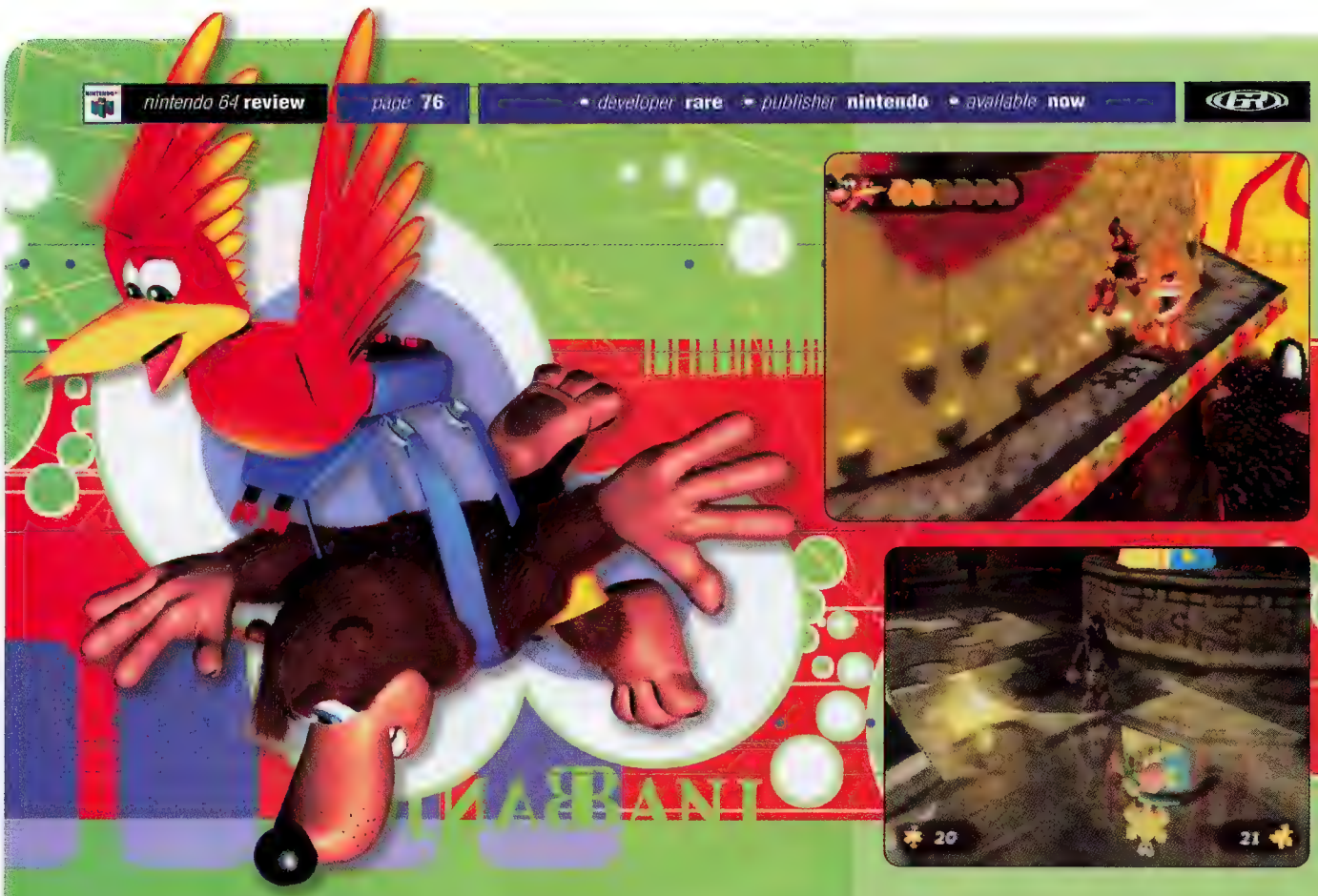
Set up along the lines of the recent rash of skateboarding games, Razor lets you choose from two manga-style little tykes, boy or girl, and have at a check list of goals to open up subsequent levels. The back story—your friends have been kidnapped by a crazy robot—serves as a goal, but otherwise, Razor adheres to the formula, playing like a scaled-down version of T-Hawk: the shoulder buttons trigger spin with the modifiers on square and circle, and grinds on triangle. The engine is especially good: the usual z-buffering trash is practically nonexistent, the character models are solid and well-animated, and the control, though a tad squirrely, is easy to grasp and tight overall. One thing I do find particularly out of place, though, is the music. Seeing as how Razor will appeal mainly to kids as young as five, weighing it down with alt rock seems a bit weird. Otherwise, Razor comes highly recommended—helmet and pads optional. **GR**



- WOW. AN EXTREME SPORTS GAME WITH CHARACTER DESIGNS!
- EASY TO PLAY. TOUGH-TO-MASTER CONTROLS
- IMPRESSIVE ENGINE. EXCELLENT POLYS FOR A PS GAME
- MUSIC DOESN'T FIT-HURTS MY EARS

REPUBLIC SAYS... RAZOR CAME OUT OF NOWHERE AND REALLY IMPRESSED ME. ASIDE FROM TONY HAWK, IT'S THE BEST THING GOING ON SMALL URETHANE WHEELS.

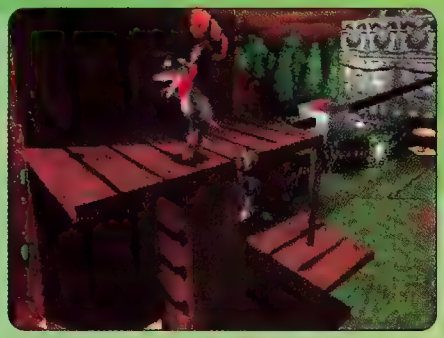
B

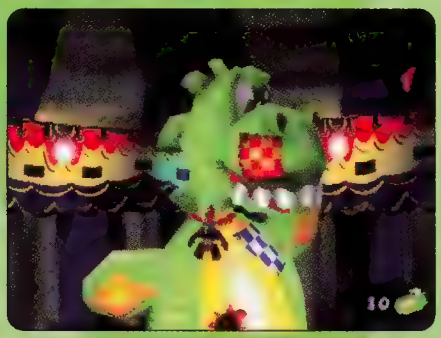


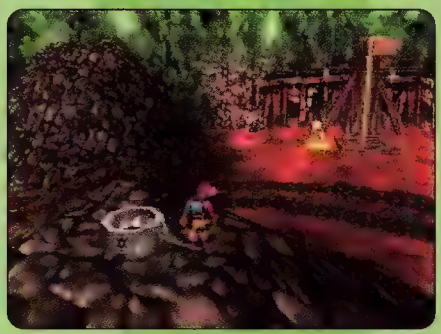
BANJO-TOOIE

BY DAVE HALVERSON

With their drop-dead-gorgeous Banjo-Tooie, Rare opts for more epic adventure.
It may not be exactly what I wanted for Xmas, but I'll take it nevertheless

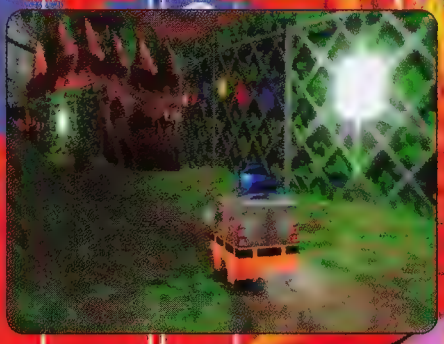






Nintendo's sacred and most esteemed first-party developer, Rare rules over the Nintendo 64 like overlords, wielding their own special brand of magic with uncanny regularity. Year after year they make the console do things that only a select few can, while delivering some of the most successful software on the planet. Rare generally makes two types of games: hard-core action games like the SNES 2D Donkey Kong Country series; the legendary BattleToads; the even more legendary Golden Eye; their answer to Super Mario 64, Banjo Kazooie; and Jet Force Gemini—my game of the year for '99. More recently, Rare has begun popping out more kid-friendly adventures that unfold in stunning story-book fashion, like Donkey Kong 64 and Banjo-Tooie. Seeing as how the majority of Nintendo's massive user base are kids and teens, it's easy to see why Rare's latest games have placed an emphasis more on exploration and tasks than the precision platforming antics that made the developers famous.

What am I so gently getting at? Although I am one of Rare's biggest fans, I'm not exactly wild about Banjo-Tooie, which as it turns out feels more like a refined version of Donkey Kong 64 than a true Banjo sequel. I

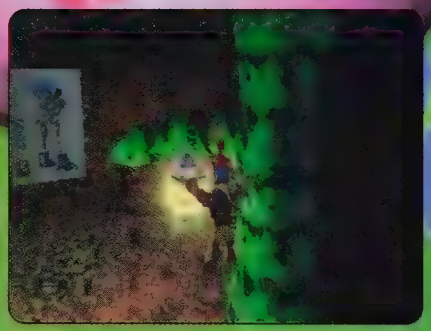


like it a lot, I just don't love it.

The gist of the gameplay is as follows: Gruntilda has been resurrected with one slight problem—she's a skeleton, sans organs, flesh, guts, the works. In order to lay some skin on those rotten old bones, the witches build a contraption that sucks the life force out of whatever it's pointed at. Of course, her first target is Banjo's house, where Banjo, Kazooie, Mumbo Jumbo, and Bottles are enjoying an innocent card game. Feeling the tremor before the blast hits home (literally), everyone hits the dirt—except for Bottles, who is unfortunately killed in the blast and reduced to a sad, floating specter camped outside where the house once stood. Seeking revenge for their burrowing buddy, Banjo and Kazooie vow to stop Gruntilda once and for all and set out to bury the bloated bag one more time.

After a trip to Jiggywiggy's, where you'll piece together a puzzle using your jiggies to open up areas, it's off to Jamjar's fox hole. Jamjar not only teaches you techniques but his burrows serve as warps to get from area to area. Once you arrive at each gigantic themed environment (all of which are visual bliss), as you run around surveying the hugeness that abounds, you'll notice blocked paths, Mumbo Jumbo pads, Humba Wumba pads, Banjo and Kazooie split pads, and hear the Jinjos' cries for rescue.

Let the action puzzle mania begin! Tasks and exploration over skill are the basis for completing each area, and it is here where I wish I was playing a Jet Force sequel instead of Banjo-Tooie. Okay—Mumbo pad. Go to Mumbo's. Become Mumbo. Go back to the pad. Use Mumbo magic. Solve the riddle. Now warp back to Mumbo's, become Banjo and Kazooie and move on. Oh, a Humba Wumba pad... a Banjo Pad, a Kazooie pad... argh! When do I get to do some platforming!? Aside from possessing Mumbo and whatever Humba Wumba changes you into, you will also run across places too high to reach, various obstructions you cannot pass yet, etc. In these circumstances, you need to seek out the next Jamjar hole and hope he's ready to teach the skill you need. Once you have the skill, it's simply a matter of returning and using it. If he doesn't have the skill you need, you may not learn it for some time, in which case you'll have to double back later to rescue that previously unattainable Jinjo or grab the Jiggy. So, Banjo-Tooie becomes more



CONTINUED ON PAGE 124 ▸

- THE GAME LOOKS REALLY OUTSTANDING
- IT'S ALL ANY KID WILL EVER NEED-IT'S FRIGGIN' MASSIVE
- SOMETIMES IT'S HARD JUST TO FIND THE LEVELS
- MORE MINI-GAMES THAN I CARE TO PLAY

REPUBLIC SAYS... What I wouldn't give for another hardcore rare game like Battletoads or Jet Force Gemini. They do these big adventures so well, but I think I've had my fill.

B

MICKEY'S SPEEDWAY USA

BY MIKE HOBBS

What happened here? Rare makes a carbon copy of Mario Kart 64 and somehow manages to lose the plot

This one was a bit of a surprise. Easily Rare's weakest N64 effort to date, Mickey's Speedway USA is a strictly by-the-numbers kart racer that finds Nintendo's star developers inexplicably off the pace.

What a letdown this is from the comparative high of Diddy Kong Racing. The sheer ambition of that game's vast one-player adventure mode brought something original and exciting to the well-worn formula. With that reasoning, a straightforward kart racer should have been a cinch after DKR, yes? Apparently not.

First on the list of complaints is a truly uninspired set of tracks. Not only are they lacking in fun corner combinations and powersliding opportunities, but the settings are deathly dull. Racing through Philadelphia or Washington, D.C. is not my idea of stimulating kart racing scenery—no offense to residents of these historic locations. At least the rather terrible Magical Racing Tour on DC and PS used more entertaining Disney theme park settings for its haphazard races.

And dynamically, Mickey's Speedway is absolutely nowhere. A modern kart racing game must have some kind of a boosting powerslide, a way to gain speed while oversteering, as so brilliantly implemented in Mario Kart 64 and in Naughty Dog's awesome Crash Team Racing. In Mickey, powersliding seems actually a detriment to speed, sapping almost all technique and addictiveness from negotiating the courses, which, as I mentioned, are not all that well laid out anyway.

About the only thing that Rare really got right in this game are the characters. A perfectly mainstream set of Disney icons like Mickey, Donald, and Goofy brings the game its only sense of magic and charm. They're very well rendered and boast a fair number of funny little exclamations, making it a very chatty, cute-sounding game.

I can't deny that this game would be fine for younger players obsessed with all things Disney, but coming from Rare, this half-hearted effort is a little distressing. There is nothing here to recommend it over Mario Kart, Diddy Kong, or Crash Team.

GR

- GREAT CAST OF DISNEY CHARACTERS
- FUNNY LITTLE VOICES

- BLAND TRACKS, BLAND GRAPHICS, BLAND GAMEPLAY
- NOT UP TO RARE STANDARDS, NOT BY A LONG SHOT

REPUBLIC SAYS... GOOD FOR THE LITTLE KIDDIES ONLY, RARE'S EXTRAORDINARILY AVERAGE MICKEY'S SPEEDWAY BRINGS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING NEW TO THE GENRE.

C

TOP GEAR DAREDEVIL

review by m. hobbs • dev: papaya studios • pub: kemco • avail: now

PS2 C+

Top Gear Daredevil is a great-looking game in search of an idea. Well-detailed metropolitan environments like London, Rome, Tokyo, and San Francisco, and a great selection of small city cars form a good backdrop, but the core of the game, its very concept, is simply not that creative or engaging.

Part of the problem here lies in the rather abstract nature of the gameplay. The idea is to race around the various cities collecting a certain number of tokens before a time limit expires; talk about an arbitrary game concept. Think of the excitement of Crazy Taxi's goals, or even of the amusement inherent in Super Runabout's humor-tinged missions. In Top Gear Daredevil, it's hard to get excited about collecting tokens, even if that may be all you are basically doing in those other games. But theme is all important in a game like this, and Top Gear simply has none, apart from its use of cool small cars. And the control isn't what it could be either, which is decidedly understeer-biased, leaving the small cars feeling leaden as they race through the cities. They should be nimble and chuckable through the corners, but they are not.

Things improve somewhat with the game's multiplayer modes, which include straight racing and bomb tag and coin collection challenges. This is where the real excitement of the game is to be found, as these modes represent the only truly interesting and fun gameplay in Top Gear Daredevil. GR

DUCATI

review by d. halverson • dev: attention to detail • pub: acclaim • avail: now

PlayStation B-

Imagine a racing game set up in Gran Turismo fashion except, rather than automobiles, the vehicles are all Ducati motorcycles from the earliest vintage models right up to the pavement-churning Monsters. It all rides on ATD's Rollcage engine, and in terms of depth, ranks as the deepest two-wheeled touring/racing adventure available for the PS. The game consists of a series of licensing challenges that open up sectors exactly like Gran Turismo's. Winning blocks of races earns you cash, which you can then blow with no regard, upgrading your current ride or cashing out in search of a mightier steed. All of this is handled especially well by the respectable ATD from the interface to the models. The racing is very good with smooth analog control and realistic weight distribution replicating the bikes very well. However, I found the single third-person camera available a bit suspect. It allows the rider model to seep in to the bike when pulling wheelies and I also noticed the windshield popping through the rider's helmet (ooh, that's gotta hurt). Besides these little glitches in the matrix, Ducati racing is a deep excursion in cycling well worth taking. GR

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SILENT SCOPE

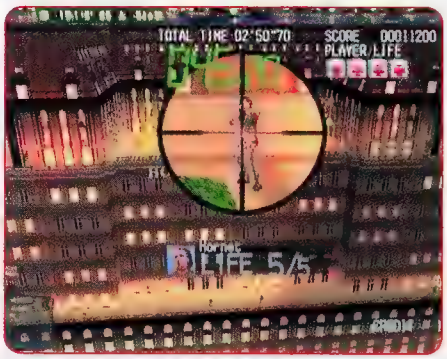
review by m. hobbs • dev/pub: konami • avail: now

B-

Any home version of Silent Scope is inevitably losing something over its arcade counterpart. Without the kick of looking through an LCD scope for those close up kills, is Silent Scope nothing more than a Virtua Cop wanna-be?

The truth of the situation, however, is that Silent Scope holds up pretty well at home, the game playing out like a good light gun game with a good gimmick. There are dramatic settings and situations, and the hook of using sniper sight to shoot out tires and put down armed terrorists proves to be devilish fun. Not as fun, of course, as the arcade version, but any light gun game played with a pad is always going to suffer just a little. At least you can do things in the home version that you couldn't do in the arcade, like vary the zoom rate of the sight.

As for whether Silent Scope is better on DC or PS2, there is actually very little separating the two, either graphically or in respective feature sets, making choosing between them basically a matter of controller preference. GR



CHICKEN RUN

review by b. fiechter • dev: blitz games • pub: eidos • avail: now

C+

Comparisons will be made to Metal Gear Solid, but the only real similarity Chicken Run has to Konami's masterwork is in the emphasis on evading the enemy with stealth. Here the enemy is Mr. and Mrs. Tweedy, owners of a chicken farm who want to improve profits by grinding their plump birds into pot pies. Plotting an escape, you're looking for items like a weight, engine and fireworks to construct inventions that will buy your flock freedom: a catapult to launch over the fence, a Tweedy costume to sneak past the dogs. These mini-games add needed variety to Chicken Run; running through the shadows, sneaking around coops and hiding in crates and other farm objects to avoid the searching eye of the Tweedy's and their watch dogs is certainly a unique and fun bit of gameplay, but a constricting camera and a far too tiny farm to explore halts the game's early momentum. GR

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX

review by s. thomason • dev: z-axis • pub: acclaim • avail: now

C+

If you're hoping for Dave Mirra to do for BMX what Tony Hawk did for skateboarding, you're probably going to be disappointed. The two games share a lot in common—challenge-based levels, the ability to grind on almost everything, and a full roster of their sports' professionals - but Freestyle BMX lacks the tight, intuitive feel of Pro Skater. The biggest problem is turning around and getting lined up for a jump or stunt. It's certainly doable, but the effort involved in such a seemingly simple task is too great. I'm also unimpressed with the state of the game's visuals on Dreamcast. This looks like a really straightforward port with many of the same pop-up and clipping issues that plagued the PlayStation version. The irritating soundtrack also remains tragically unchanged. To its credit though, Mirra still manages to deliver some enjoyment despite its many problems. The levels are large, well designed, and provide the player with ample opportunities to catch big air and perform outrageous tricks. There are quite a few secret areas hidden within each environment as well, requiring you to explore every nook and cranny. The wipeouts, a staple of the extreme sports genre, are also present and accounted for, with a certain one that involves a moving train looking particularly nasty.

Since Activision's Mat Hoffman has been delayed until next year, Mirra will have to tide BMX fans over. There's a lot to like about it, but the DC version's not worth getting if you already own the PS disc. GR

MS. PAC MAN

review by m. hobbs • dev/pub: namco • avail: now

B

This game's certainly made the rounds. First appearing on PlayStation and then N64, Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness has finally found its way to the Dreamcast, and predictably, this is the best-looking, and consequently, most enjoyable version of the game yet.

Running at an eye-pleasing 60 frames per second on Dreamcast, this relaxed, overhead adventure game combines elements of classic dot chomping and ghost eating with moving block puzzles and other lightly taxing gameplay. It's quite entertaining figuring out how to get Ms. Pac-Man through the various levels, manipulating objects in the environment to best effect.

Good simple fun is the point of Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness, and at that it succeeds nicely. If you never sampled the game on PS or N64, this Dreamcast version represents the best interpretation thus far. GR

CANNON SPIKE

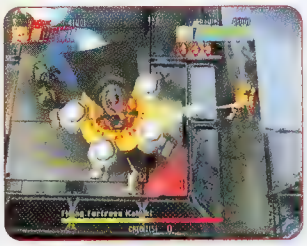
review by: m. hobbs • dev: psikyo • pub: capcom • avail: now

B-

Know what you are getting with Cannon Spike, and you probably won't be disappointed. This fast, entertaining, and supremely short arcade shooter satisfies on a purely superficial level, carried along by great visuals, mostly good gameplay, and of course, the fantastic Capcom characters.

Playing with the likes of Cammy and Mega Man in an overhead action game is a real treat, and helps to offset somewhat the severely limited nature of the game's levels, perhaps the greatest flaw to be found here. Most levels are but a few screens wide, leaving very little ground to cover when what you really want are long, scrolling levels like in Capcom's classic MERCS. And the visual style begs to be expanded upon with extended levels, but that's just not part of the equation here.

Super short levels or no, the action contained within each is quite good. Psikyo's depth of experience in creating shooters is certainly in evidence here, with each character sporting six unique moves to tackle the various bosses and enemies in the game. The control is fast and very refined in its feel, freeing the requisite bullet dodging from frustration. But I don't like the artificial difficulty induced by a lock-on targeting reticle that fades after a brief period. I think the designers must have found that with a permanent lock-on system, the game was too easy, so they limited its effectiveness.

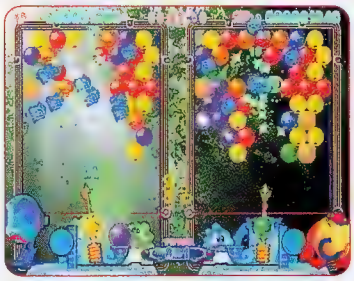


But for what it intends to be Capcom's Cannon Spike is a success. Yes, it's almost criminally short, but it is easily entertaining enough to play through a few times, if only to enjoy the different Capcom characters. GR

SUPER BUST A MOVE

review by m. hobbs • dev: taito • pub: acclaim • avail: now

PS2 B



What new hardware's game library can be considered complete without a version of Bust-A-Move? This classic Taito puzzle series soldiers on, gaining new characters and aesthetic ideas with each and every turn.

The latest, Super Bust-A-Move for PS2 is certainly one of the most psychedelic to date, and there is high weirdness at work in the character design, and I'm thankful to Acclaim for leaving well enough alone here. As for the game, you know the drill (match up colored bubbles), and it remains one of the most inspired and addictive puzzle ideas since the original Tetris.

It annoys me when people see a game like this on the PS2 and groan. I try to remind them that not everything needs to push the machine. Games like this exist on very powerful machines simply because they are fun, polygon counts be damned. GR

SONIC SHUFFLE

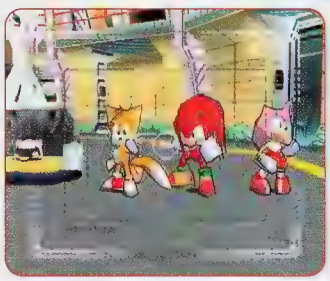
review by m. hobbs • dev: sega • pub: sega • avail: now

C-

Sonic games always seem to have at least a certain measure of quality about them. Even experimental efforts like Sonic 3D Blast and Sonic R managed to find fans. But with Sonic Shuffle, Sega has made, in my opinion, the worst Sonic game since Sonic Spinball.

What's maddening about Sonic Shuffle is its simple lack of fun. This is inexcusable for a Mario Party-inspired four-player virtual board game. Convoluted and often confusing, Sonic Shuffle makes moving your players around the board an absolute chore. And the mini-games are overly complicated and are such a far cry from Mario Party's simple and massively fun multiplayer challenges that you quickly lose patience with the game. And the promised network play feature has simply been dropped from the final version.

Sonic Shuffle does at least have a good visual style, but honestly, who plays a game like this for graphics? A huge missed opportunity here. GR



TYPING OF THE DEAD

review by m. hobbs • dev: sega/smilebit • pub: sega • avail: now

B

How on earth did Sega ever dream this up? Replacing the light gun with a keyboard seems about as nonsensical an idea as one could imagine, but perhaps the oddest thing of all is that it actually makes for a very fun, and dare I say useful, experience.

The idea is simple. Words, phrases, and eventually complete (and often funny) sentences appear floating over the game's enemies, and each correct keystroke is like a blast from a gun. Take too long to type the words out, and you take a hit. It's actually very satisfying, and interesting in that a seasoned typist can take down even the best gamer.

The Typing of the Dead is one of those great oddball games that simply must be experienced. It's fun and weird, and will actually make you a very fast, accurate typist, if you care about attaining such a skill. GR

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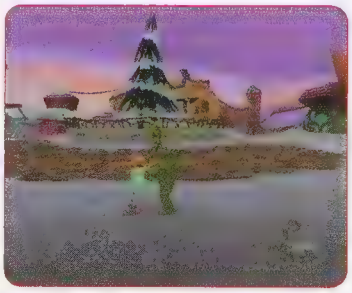
THE GRINCH

review by b. fiechter • dev: universal pub: konami • avail: now

F

Here's the sad thing: The Grinch, a half-baked turkey of a movie with the indefatigable Jim Carrey straining under layers of makeup, made over 130 million dollars its first eight days of release, and now this amazingly slipshod video game take on the film will ride the wake of its success. Please beware: this effort would have been suspect in the first year of the Nintendo 64 or PlayStation, and on the Dreamcast the game comes off as a monumental failure on every level. The shoddiest PlayStation-to-DC port yet of one of the shoddiest PlayStation games of the year, The Grinch will have you staring in incredulity. The Grinch's world is drab, sparse and lifeless. The smallest items snap into view in the most unlikely of places. Soporific task-based gameplay takes place in levels that have been cobbled together with discarded parts from countless other games. And the attempts at Dr. Suessian story-telling is so bad that... you get the point. This is the holiday game with less cheer than a Halloween séance. GR



RAYCRISIS

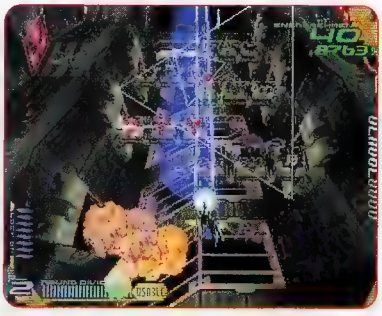
review by m. hobbs • dev: taito • pub: working designs • avail: now

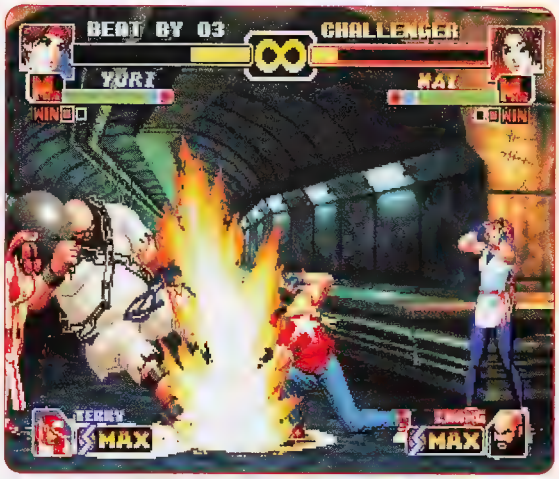
B-

Raystorm is a favorite shooter of mine, mostly for aesthetic reasons, it must be said. I love the mechanical design in that game (a Taito strength), and it's a great polygonal interpretation of the overhead shooter. Its gameplay was solid, complete with a Panzer-like lock-on system, but it was the look of the game that kept me playing till the end. What's more, it was a two player game.

Now the sequel is upon us in the form of Raycrisis, and it picks up pretty much where Raystrom left off, only now, there's a new ship with homing bullets joining the two so-called Wave Riders from the first game. And there's another crucial difference: Raycrisis is a one player only game. What on earth could have possessed Taito to remove this feature? Back when I did a preview for this game, I theorized that Taito had upped the polygon quotient at the sacrifice of a two-player mode, but looking at the game with a fresh pair of eyes, I'm not so sure that they've done even that.

Oh well. Other than this glaring omission, Raycrisis is about what one would expect from a Raystorm sequel. It's more of the same, just different. But I have to say that the same visual inspiration which lit the first game isn't quite in evidence here, as the look is less focused, more chaotic. I prefer the more subdued original. At least the Zuntata music is typically up to snuff. GR



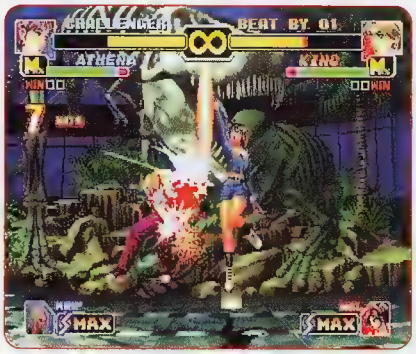


KING OF FIGHTERS '99

review by c. hoffman • dev: snk pub: agetec • avail: now

C

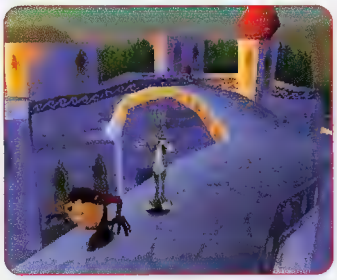
While I'm really psyched to see Agetec bringing out SNK's classic KOF games here in the U.S., I'm afraid that King of Fighters '99 on PlayStation isn't exactly the version to get. Unlike the Dreamcast version, with its extra characters and awesome backgrounds, the PlayStation version is essentially a direct-from-Neo-Geo port in terms of gameplay. For the most part, that's a good thing, as it means 32 fighters, including three versions of Kyo, Iori, Terry, Ryo, Takuma, Leona, Athena, Shingo, K' and all the rest. It also means classic, strategic 2D gameplay, loaded with awesome special moves and super attacks, further enhanced by the new four-man teams and striker assist system, as well as nice, effect-filled, detailed backdrops. Unfortunately, the controls just seem like they aren't as responsive as they should be when doing some special moves, but even worse is the loading time. The frequent, lengthy loading has always been a problem for this series on PlayStation, and it severely breaks up what should be a fast-paced flow. On the plus side, this version of KOF has an exclusive, extensive art gallery and a color-edit option, but they really don't make the game worth getting. By now 2D fighting fans should know that the Dreamcast is the system of choice, so pick up that version instead. GR



BUGS BUNNY AND TAZ

review by m. hobbs • dev/pub: infogrames • avail: now

PlayStation B-



Unrefined is the word that kept popping into my head as I was playing Bugs Bunny & Taz: Timebusters. Unsatisfying control and slightly sloppy collision detection are with you every step of the way in this game. And yet, behind this distracting veil of questionable execution lies a good 3D adventure game, filled with enough fun ideas and play mechanics that it just transcends its dynamic shortcomings.

In the game's unique tag team style play, you switch freely between Bugs and Taz, each with their own useful capabilities. Of course, Taz can twirl into a tornado, and Bugs can spin his ears for a soft landing from on high. And often, teamwork between the two characters is required, as when a patch of soft earth can be bored into by Taz, allowing Bugs to enter and tunnel under. Taz can even pick up Bugs and hurl him onto far off platforms, or even serve as a springboard for reaching higher levels. Clever bits like these bring a good amount of discovery to the game's levels, which are further highlighted by fun distractions like mini hockey and basketball games and high-speed slides and dragon rides. Naturally, the point of it all is to collect tokens that allow access to different parts of a level and new worlds to explore.

But any analysis of this game must return to its sub par player interface, surely one of the most important elements in any game. The control simply does not feel good, and executing tasks like block stacking, for example, are rendered far more frustrating than they need to be, simply because the collision detection and general physics of the game are unsophisticated. In the end however, it is enjoyable despite its obvious flaws. GR

DONALD DUCK

review by b. fiechter • dev/ pub: ubi soft • avail: now

C+

Donald Duck is a generic, thoroughly average platformer, and yet I found myself playing through it more than once. This style of game design is so rare that I tended to look past Donald Duck's flaws and enjoy it more than I probably should have.

Yet another by-the-numbers port from Nintendo 64 and PlayStation, the game yearns for Dreamcast touch ups. The visual style is bright and cheerful, but its flat simplicity has limited appeal; more detailed textures would have at least helped compensate for the lackluster design. Still, there is a pleasant atmosphere to the cartoon world, and commanding Donald Duck has its inherent charm.

Playing through the game in a few hours is likely the first time you pick up the controller, but the four extremely short worlds do offer traditional platforming challenges that can be entertaining. Here again, a hunger for this kind of gameplay had me pretending the game wasn't so easy and shallowly straightforward—run forward, jump, collect, avoid hazards, repeat, fight boss. It's not so bad in its approach, just its execution. GR

MOTO RACER

review by m. hobbs • dev: delphine • pub: infogrames • avail: now

PlayStation C

Nearly any motorcycle racer is going to seem a bit of a comedown after playing Namco's Moto GP, but even so, a game like Moto Racer World Tour is a little difficult to stomach.

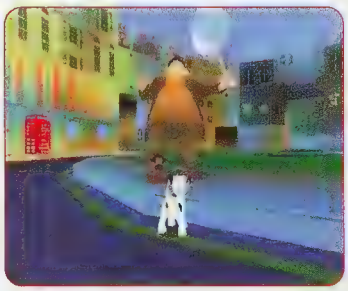
Not that the game doesn't try. Featuring both road racing and motocross, the game does an admirable job representing each form of two-wheeled action, with acceptable physics, especially in the motocross sections. The game's biggest failing, however, is a very sloppy 3D engine, rife with texture warping, pop-up, and less than silky smooth frame rates. GR

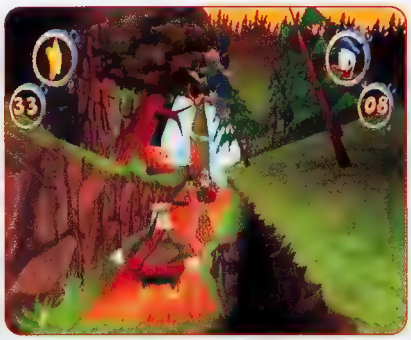
102 DALMATIONS

review by d. halverson • dev: crystal dynamics • pub: eidos • avail: now

D-

This must be someone's idea of a joke. I could have sworn I saw the words Dreamcast and Crystal Dynamics on the CD case...yep So this is what the once mighty Crystal D has been reduced to? This bare-bones Dreamcast game (which is merely a PS game posing as Dreamcast) is pretty awful. The control is erratic (when you hold forward, Oddball runs right), the architecture is arcane, the in-game models are just sad, and, and, ahh! I can't believe that Crystal made this. My advice is to leave these puppies lost. Let Cruela deal with 'em. To say that kids will like it would be an insult to kids. First The Grinch and now this? What the heck is going on? Overly simplistic gameplay and PS graphics do not a Dreamcast game make. GR





Donkey Kong Country

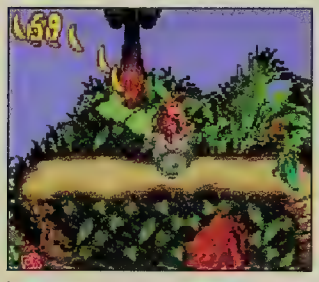
GAME BOY COLOR

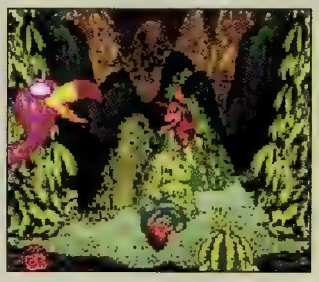
dev: rare • pub: nintendo • avail: now

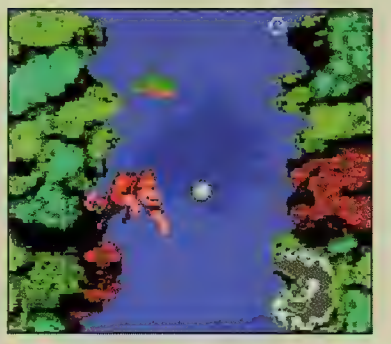
reviewed by c. hoffman

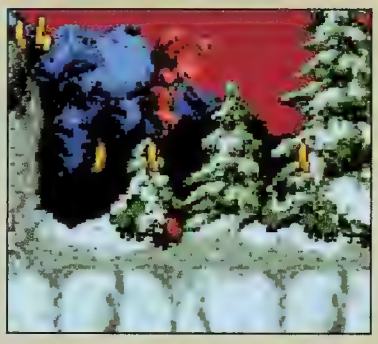
A

Donkey Kong Country has restored my faith in the Game Boy Color. Month after month, I play a glut of 2D platformers on the GBC—some good looking, some with unique mechanics, but very few that are seriously enjoyable. I began to ask myself: "Have I just played one GBC game too many? Are these actually good games and I'm too jaded to notice?" And then DKC arrived and Rare and Nintendo reminded me what games are all about. Just like the original DKC did on SNES years ago, the handheld version excels in every category. Not only is the game incredible to look at (by Game Boy Color standards), but it's loaded with awesome technique, excellent controls and great music. And damn, is it fun. Companies rarely (no pun intended) take the time to design a game so carefully. Every enemy, every power-up barrel and every hidden zone has been placed perfectly, making the game both fun and challenging. Every level is filled with intense pattern-based madness that will have you cursing your first time through, but with skill and a little practice you'll feel the satisfaction of overcoming levels that once seemed impossible. A few elements have even been enhanced over the original: there are more bonus games, a few levels have been modified, printer compatibility has been added, and the game now has a much-appreciated auto save. Whether you're a fan of the original or never played a DK game before, Donkey Kong Country is awesome. This is what a Game Boy game should be. GR









Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX

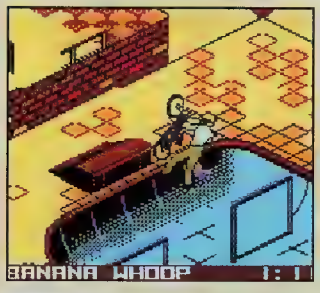
GAME BOY COLOR

dev: neon studios • pub: acclaim • avail: now

reviewed by c. hoffman

B-

This just isn't supposed to happen. I've got Tony Hawk 2 and Dave Mirra, both for GBC, one a conversion of the greatest extreme sports game ever, and the other a conversion of...a game that was not as well received. Yet, Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX on Game Boy runs circles around the portable competition by creating a game that keeps the controls and objectives simple, yet still delivers tons of moves and innovative environments. Though not as ambitious as the more advanced versions of Mirra, the Game Boy version provides eight courses through four worlds, each with numerous fun challenges. Unfortunately there isn't a selection of real-world riders to compete with, but you do win extra tricks and bike upgrades, and there are loads of secret challenges to complete. The fun comes in learning the lay of the levels and figuring out how to combine your tricks and grinds to score mad points. The only thing holding Dave Mirra from greatness is that the controls aren't as responsive as they should be for maximum enjoyment. Still the best extreme sports game yet for the little ol' GBC. GR



Batman Beyond: R.O.T.J.

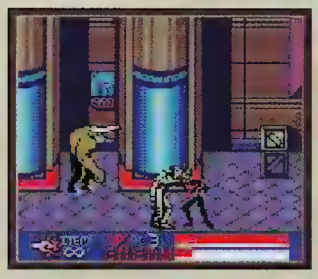
GAME BOY COLOR

dev: kemco • pub: ubi soft • avail: now

reviewed by c. hoffman

C

Want mindless beat-'em-up action on the go? Then Batman Beyond: Return of the Joker is your ticket. Actually more playable than the N64 or PlayStation versions of the game, Batman Beyond relies on the old Final Fight type of gameplay, where you mindlessly pound wave after wave of enemies as you progress through the levels. Batman doesn't have many moves—no holds or throws—and the few Batman weapons that are included don't add much variety. The enemies aren't too challenging either, but at least the graphics, animation and music are all decent. On the other hand, the story is surprisingly well done and had me eager to play through to the end, despite the game's extremely repetitive nature. Batman Beyond can be fun if you want to take your brain out for a bit. GR



Inspector Gadget

GAME BOY COLOR

dev: rfx interactive • pub: ubi soft • avail: now

reviewed by c. hoffman

C+

Unlike most of the games I've been subjected to on Game Boy this month, Inspector Gadget actually does a very good job using its license. Based on the classic cartoon and not the travesty that was the live-action movie, Inspector Gadget faithfully captures all the wacky gizmos and quirky humor that have given the character such longevity. All of Gadget's gadgets are built right in to the gameplay, such as his extendible neck, spring shoes, inflatable coat, and of course those roller skate shoes that always kick in at the worst times - accompanied by appropriate animation. Power-ups, such as a helicopter and a plunger attack, are also available. Players can even switch to Penny or Brain at any time, and, in true TV-show fashion, they end up being much more useful than Uncle Gadget: Gadget is much better used as a goofy oaf to take out enemies and absorb damage. Sadly, all this effort doesn't help the boring, generic level design; the stages almost seem randomly organized. Another detractor is the interface, as it takes far too long to switch characters or weapons, which bogs down gameplay incredibly. And where's the damn Gadget theme song!? Still, a decent game for Inspector Gadget fans. GR

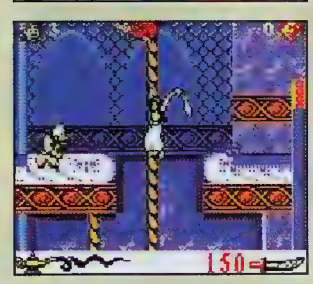
DISNEY'S ALADDIN

GAME BOY COLOR

dev: crawfish interactive · pub: ubi soft · avail: now
reviewed by c. hoffman

C+

Talk about déjà vu. I swear I've played this game before. I swear I played Aladdin a few years ago, only it was in black and white and it was released by Virgin. And you know what? It's not my imagination. Disney's Aladdin on GBC is the exact same game that hit Game Boy several years back, now colorized. That wouldn't be a bad thing if Aladdin was a great game in the first place, but it's really a fairly average platformer, backed by the Disney aesthetic. Graphics and music are good, and it follows the film well, but the animation is too choppy and the controls are too sloppy to make the game particularly fun. Kids will probably have a good time with it, however, if they're into the movie and characters. Just be warned: this is nothing more than a colorized reissue. GR



JUNGLE BOOK: M.W.A.

GAME BOY COLOR

dev/pub: ubi soft · avail: now
reviewed by c. hoffman

B

The Jungle Book: Mowgli's Wild Adventure isn't quite what I was expecting. Not just another Disney side-scrolling platformer for kids, this game takes a slower-paced, more puzzle oriented approach that feels more like Abe's Oddysee than anything else. Amazingly, it works. The deliberate pace combines with impressive visuals, good music, rock-solid control and one of the coolest intros ever on Game Boy to make a game that stands out from the crowded pack—and actually does a better portable Oddworld than Oddworld did. Instead of just running and jumping, you, as Mowgli, have to make use of nearby items and switches to help you through each level. See a snake guarding a ledge? Then grab some fruit and lure it away for a second or two while you make the jump. How about that blocked cave? Find the switch, then run and jump like a maniac to get in before it closes. And just to prevent life from getting boring, a few racing-type challenge levels are thrown in for variety. Again, superior level design reigns supreme. Jungle Book doesn't exactly get the adrenaline flowing, but it's easily the best Disney game on the system this season. GR

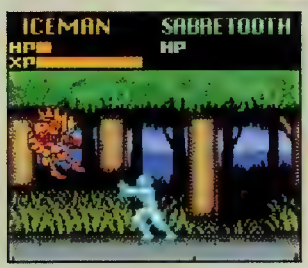
X-MEN: MUTANT WARS

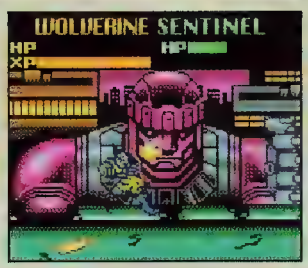
GAME BOY COLOR

dev: hal corp. · pub: activision · avail: now
reviewed by c. hoffman

D-

Here we go again. Another waste of a perfectly good license. I was hoping Activision would have learned after the awful mess that was X-Men: Mutant Academy on GBC, but boy was I wrong. X-Men: Mutant Wars is a side-scrolling action game that takes five of your favorite mutants and puts them into one putrid title. It seems they wanted to combine the varied moves of a fighting game with the action of a side-scroller, but sadly the moves are imprecise, despite their extreme simplicity, and the characters move with all the agility of a sea anenome. But worse than that are the atrociously designed levels: they seem to have designed one screen's worth of graphics and repeated it over and over, ad infinitum. Enemies just keep coming, and only a few obstacles spice up the uncreative design. But the biggest question is, why did they make this an X-Men game? Most of the enemies aren't from the X-universe, and the dialogue is a mockery of the classic characters. "My bones are laced with calcium and adamantium," says Wolverine. Oh, that's right: they made it an X-Men game in hopes they'd sell a copy of this turd. Don't let it be to you. GR





POWERPUFF GIRLS: B.M.D.

GAME BOY COLOR

dev: sennari · pub: bam entertainment · avail: now
reviewed by c. hoffman

F

Regardless what a game is about or who it's aimed at, one thing that will always be of utmost importance is the control. If the game doesn't control well it will be painful at best and unplayable at worst. Powerpuff Girls: Bad Mojo Dojo, dear readers, falls into the "painful" category. Maybe I could overlook the substandard graphics (they would have been average 10 years ago), the boring gameplay and the lame level design if it controlled halfway decent, but that's a moot point. The problem is that Blossom (she's the playable character in this game) controls like she's always on ice. It's a constant struggle to move with any precision, as the character slips and slides and forces you to battle her momentum more than you battle the enemies. Speaking of battling enemies, the sloppy controls make hitting your opponent while escaping damage nearly impossible. BAM had better seriously retool the engine before they release the other promised games in the trilogy. GR

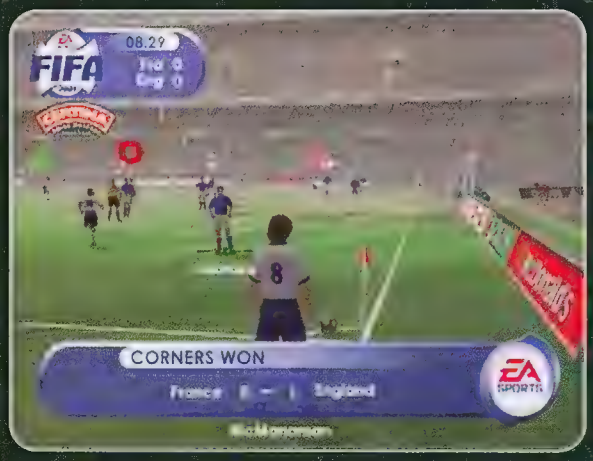
EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE

GAME BOY COLOR

dev: sandbox studios · pub: ubi soft · avail: now
reviewed by c. hoffman

F

I'd rather play the old groove if this is the new one. The Emperor's New Groove is the epitome of generic, poorly made platformers on Game Boy Color, and a shining example of how to take the money of unsuspecting kids who are expecting the quality synonymous with the Disney name. Basically, TENG puts you in the role of a llama who jumps, attacks and spits through some of the most uninteresting and pointless levels I've ever had to traverse. The graphics are thoroughly devoid of detail and the use of color is incredibly poor. First-generation black and white GB games looked better. To make matters worse, your llama moves with all the speed and agility of a sloth. With games like Donkey Kong Country out there, why would anyone ever buy a game like this? Disney should be embarrassed. GR



I played the Japanese version of FIFA to death, certainly more than I ever played any soccer game before. Call me shallow, but it wasn't until I saw soccer rendered on the PS2 that I really got the urge to delve into the joy of goal.

The Japanese version that I enjoyed so much could be considered the trial run for the official American release, FIFA 2001. Though deeply related, the domestic release boasts a number of improvements that make it a better game overall.

One of the more distracting flaws in the Japanese version was the nasty slow down that occurred whenever players grouped up on screen, and this has been nearly excised from FIFA 2001. Only during rain matches does the game ever slow down. Gains have also been made in the character models. When seen in closeup, there is better definition on the faces and more expressive animation.

Gameplay enhancements are more subtle, but welcome nonetheless. A new shot meter makes scoring a more skillful endeavor than in the Japanese FIFA, and two additional defensive moves have been added, one which allows you to skip the ball over your body and another which shields the ball from opponents when stationary. Both bring even more finesse to the game's strong defensive play, though I would still like a little more fluidity in the passing system, something closer to Konami's ISS engine.

This minor complaint aside, FIFA 2001 is a great soccer game. Although it doesn't play vastly different than previous FIFAs, it's faster, smoother, and is adequately deep, and the whole game has an engaging energy that is difficult to ignore. Carded fouls and goals are punctuated by immediate and dramatic closeups, showing the highly detailed characters arguing, shoving each other, or celebrating in any number of amusing ways. It is during these moments that you are truly thankful for this new generation of hardware. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

PS2

FIFA SOCCER 2001

by: m. hobbs
dev: ea
pub: ea
available: now

The best looking soccer game of all time? For now, yes. The best playing? Not yet, but it's getting close.

B+

This is the second game that crossed my desk this month that really took me by surprise with an all-around, completely enjoyable gaming experience. And, like Power Spike, only graphical mishaps kept it from achieving a higher score. The major problem with Xtreme Sports, aside from occasional object pop-up and some minor frame rate problems, is that the environment textures seem to wobble and melt and slide away as you move up or down a hill. It's really weird—like playing the game on acid.

With that said, Innerloop has created a fun, highly addictive game with good-looking courses (aside from the aforementioned problem) from around the globe, including competitions in Maui, Mt. Kilimanjaro, and Scotland. In Xtreme Sports, there are three or four events—chosen from snowboarding, mountain biking, ATV racing, hang gliding and bungee jumping—which are woven seamlessly into one race by having your character run to the next vehicle after the previous vehicle leg is finished. During a race, you can perform tricks, either in the air after a jump or while on the ground, to increase your turbo boost meter. You can also increase the turbo meter by punching and knocking over a competitor.

Although I found some of the courses to be rather short, I must say that the courses are all well conceived and there are shortcuts everywhere. Tokens are also hidden in some courses and finding them will unlock additional courses. The character models move and animate nicely and the overall vehicle physics are properly represented.

I highly enjoyed the hang gliding not only because it reminds me of PilotWings, but because, if you get dialed in on the landing, you can go from last place to first in a heartbeat. Also, the riding through traffic on the freeway with an ATV was excellent, although extremely short. I also found all of the sky surfing events to be thrilling.

On the audio side, the house/funk music by the collection of Euro bands is apropos and seems to enhance the racing of each event. The replays are enjoyable to watch as the camera highlights some great angles and displays the impressive running animations.

With the rather dry selection of sporting titles coming out in the next couple months, I heartily recommend you give Xtreme Sports a go. You won't be disappointed. GR

1101001 gamers' republic sports

XTREME SPORTS

by: m. puccini
dev: innerloop studios
pub: infogrames
available: now

This multi-sports title was quite the surprise in its execution and overall gaming goodness, despite the LSD-tinged textures.

B

EA's absence from the Sega lineup is spawning a tremendous presence over at the Sony camp. Hot off the heels of EA's half-dozen launch titles for the PS2 comes Knockout Kings 2001—a boxing game, judging from the success of the PS original, many have been looking forward to.

Early shots and demos sported some crafty boxer models with new facial and body properties, but for some reason these innovations are absent from our preview build. The boxers look adequate and move fluidly, though they lack high poly counts in the face and arms. I'm not sure if the PS2 version is sharing any code used by the PS version, but it's more than likely—another reason why the models aren't up to 128-bit expectations.

The action is identical to the PS version, which works well for me. An understanding of the etiquette of boxing is required to enjoy a technical bout and adopting a play style outside of mashing buttons is a must to open a deeper level of gameplay.

The AI seems to still be in the developmental stage, because I didn't recognize any CPU adjusting when using a single combo over and over. Now, the PS version doesn't have any sort of pattern-recognition defense for the CPU, but to up the ante, EA should take steps to include this in the PS2 release. **GR**

1101001 gamers' republic sports

PS2 KNOCKOUT KINGS 2K1

by: t. stratton
dev: black ops
pub: ea
available: winter

The follow-up to EA's highly regarded pugilist franchise has taken take shape on the PS2, but with a couple major issues still needing to be addressed.

Of the three PSX boxing simulation titles being released this winter, Knockout Kings 2001 is the winner by unanimous decision. The models are good, there is a wide variety of boxers (now including females) and punches—including a new haymaker punch for the knockout—and the game just plays good.

There are four modes of play, with my favorite being the Fantasy Match-Ups, where Rocky Marciano (at 49-0 is the pride of Italians) is pitted against Muhammad Ali, and is presented in classic black-and-white.

In between bouts in Career mode, where you climb the ladder to number one, you are required to train at the gym where you learn new moves and strategies and earn points to build up your fighter.

On the gameplay front, the fighters can bob and weave, have special punches, throw combinations and even throw illegal elbow or low-blow hits. On particularly powerful punches, blood goes flying and/or the mouthpiece is shot across the canvas.

There's room for improvement both graphically and in gameplay, but KK2001 still pummels the competition. **GR**

1101001 gamers' republic sports

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2K1

by: m. puccini
dev: ea sports
pub: ea
available: now

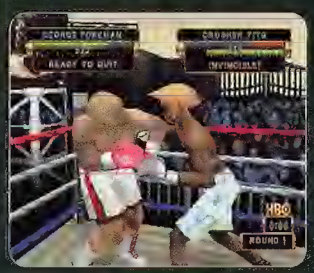
With a great presentation and new advancements over last year's version, this is the best of the boxing sims for the PSX this year.

B

The first difference you'll notice in comparing HBO Boxing to the PS Knockout Kings 2001 is that, although the HBO models are seamless, they aren't nearly as polished and the faces of the pros are more blocky and cartoony, whereas KK2001's are nearly perfect replications.

The punching in HBO is decent, with both two-punch and three-punch combos that can be added to with powerful, single punches following. A unique feature, to switch punching hands, you press the L1 button and, although this works quite effectively, there are instances when it can be a problem: like when fighting up close, as you pull your finger off the L2 blocking button to switch, thereby leaving your face wide open.

As with KK2001, I found myself kind of getting into the career mode, although going to the gym to train before bouts is all CPU-assisted with the accrued attribute points being disseminated across the chosen abilities as opposed to any physical work involved.



HBO Boxing isn't the worst pugilist title out there, but it ultimately packs a soft punch. **GR**

1101001 gamers' republic sports

HBO BOXING

by: m. puccini
dev: osiris
pub: acclaim
available: now

Interesting elements of the game engine will keep you playing, for how long depends on your tolerance for the inadequacies.

C+

The PS version of this game should be called Occasionally Ready 2 Rumble, since it is a chore to actually activate the Rumble Flurry when it is lit. And it's too bad that the mechanism isn't a little friendlier, because there are now three different levels of Rumble Flurry to whoop-ass with, the third and most powerful allowing you to send a player airborne out of the ring and into the stands.

Another added feature that's unfortunately similarly frustrating is that the CPU AI has been tweaked to such a high degree that in the Normal and Hard difficulty levels it's not even fun as the CPU pummels you with its quickness.

On the plus side, in Championship mode, there are several new mini-games including some mildly entertaining rote memory games ala the Bemani games. Of course, returning from last year is the trademark R2R humor and the addition of new, silly characters, including the playable celebrities Michael Jackson, Shaq, and Bill and Hillary Clinton.

If you have the DC or PS2 versions, you'll definitely want to pass on this one. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

READY 2 RUMBLE 2

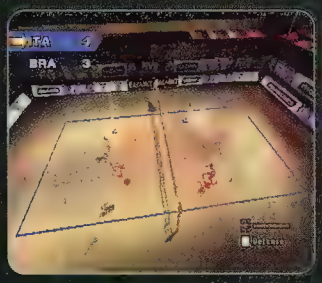
by: m. puccini
dev: point of view
pub: midway
available: now

Arcade boxing humor, The Gloved One, Shaq and Clinton can't overpower the frustrations experienced with this much-hyped sequel.

C-

I've got to say that this one kind of snuck up on me by surprise. With Power Spike, the only volleyball title for the PS, once you get past the learning curve, ignore the first-generation graphics, and get dialed into the strategy, you'll be hooked; behind the ugly, unpolished graphics (the body shadows are blocks stacked on top of each other) and lack of animations (when positioning for a serve, the character hops), lies a lesson in game physics and an incredibly fun game on the level of Mario Tennis.

For me, I was hooked after I initiated Defense position, volleyed for a while against the CPU, initiated Attack position thereby bringing my teammate up to the net, set the ball to her and had her set it back to me for a hard spike into the back corner of the opponent's court.



Developed by a French company specializing in PC tennis games, this is an extremely promising engine. On the graphics- and memory-friendly next-generation systems, this will definitely be one to watch. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

PS PRO BEACH V-BALL

by: m. puccini
dev: carapace
pub: infogrames
available: now

The graphics in the game are without a doubt first-generation, but the dynamite physics engine is worth the ugliness.

B-

After spending some serious quality time progressing through the 10-level Billiard Lessons mode in Q-Ball, you'll be able to take on the best of them down at your local tavern, having learned everything from Using English to Mastering Jump Shots.

Q-Ball is a complete pool simulation package and has some eccentricities, like the way the balls materialize up through the surface at the beginning of a game and the air pressure gauge-style hitting mechanism. But best of all, the physics and sound effects of the game are dead on.

In the one-player game, there are 10 CPU opponents and five different pool games to play: U.S. 9-Ball, Int'l 9-Ball, 8-Ball, Rotation and Straight Pool. There's also a hardcore game called Frozen Game.

The only nagging problem I could find is that more often than not the camera doesn't show the whole table, so you don't know the end point of the balls until the next shot—not a big deal, but it does affect the emotion of the game. But for the most part, Q-Ball is a great pool simulation. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

Q-BALL

by: m. puccini
dev: ask
pub: rockstar
available: now

Q-Ball: Billiards Master is a complete package that will actually help those who want to improve their pool game in the real world.

B

Nearing its last couple appearances on the PS, March Madness 2001 is a solid, extremely playable game. And it should be, as the game, as always, is running off of EA's user-friendly NBA Live engine. Although we're starting to get accustomed to B-ball games with the graphical prowess of the next-generation systems, MM2001 doesn't look all that bad for the PS. There's even some nice effects like when the backboard and goalpost continues to shake after a thunderous dunk.

On the gameplay side, I like the momentum meter and being able to turn and back a defender down to get into the paint adds a whole new dimension to B-ball video games and the move is in fine style here. Give-and-go, spin and double-spin moves to the hoop are also easily performed and add to the overall completeness of the game.

There are six modes of play, including Women's Sweet 16, Dream Tournament - with all of the best college hoops teams of the past few decades, 2001 Tournament and Dynasty.

Looking for college hoops? Grab MM2001. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

MARCH MADDNESS

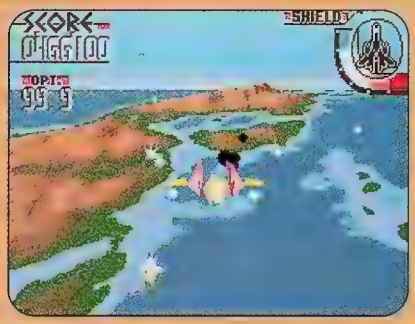
by: m. puccini
dev: black ops
pub: ea
available: now

Known for their action/shooter titles, Black Ops tries its hand at B-ball and adds enough goodness to EA's MM engine to succeed.

B

SILPHEED

[publisher] sega
[genre] action
[system] sega cd
[year] 1993



If you were one of the lucky ones to snag a PlayStation 2, then hopefully by now you've immersed yourself in the action-packed visual feast that is Silpheed: The Lost Planet and are well on your way to shooter heaven. But the thumb-blistering madness hardly had its start on PlayStation 2. Game Arts' lesson in firepower-packing intensity actually began on PCs in the '80s, but Silpheed made its console debut on the Sega CD in 1993 where it combined landmark technological feats with wild action to create a truly classic shooter.

Visually, Silpheed was far ahead of its time. With its polygonal graphics and constantly streaming uncompressed FMV backgrounds, no shooter before had quite the same impact as Silpheed. Though lacking a bit in complexity and color, the 3D effects were simply wondrous at the time, and the backgrounds were fully interactive instead of just working as eye candy to fly past. The scenery and the enemies worked together to create pure twitch shooting action. Confounding waves of wicked pattern-based foes merged with thrilling environments as players traveled through space station corridors, dodged between asteroids, and narrowly avoided massive enemy battle cruisers to provide a gameplay experience like few others. Even today, few shooters match Silpheed's dynamic intensity.

Another standout feature of Silpheed was its weapons system. Instead of collecting weapon power-ups like in other games, Silpheed rewarded players by giving them new armaments after each stage. Like the PS2 version, the game allowed you to assign different weapons to your left and right guns, but unlike its successor, it also awarded you limited-use special weapons for when the going got really tough. Even with all the firepower though, Silpheed stood out for its nearly insane challenge level, including what may be the most difficult final boss ever in a shooter.

Of course, no article on Silpheed would be complete without making mention of the game's use of background radio chatter from other pilots. Incredibly bizzare and filled with expletives, the communications, featuring classic lines like "Yee hah, I got a big one!" have to be some of the most unintentionally hilarious bytes in gaming history.

Warped humor aside, Silpheed delivered action, innovation and challenge in a way that few shooters could. Though it pales compared to its PS2 counterpart, the Sega CD Silpheed is legendary. **- C. Hoffman**

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WORLD REPUBLIC

[i] *As you may have noticed, we've implemented a few changes to World Republic this month, starting with a new international Frontlines section and the relocation of the Japanese sales chart. But games are still the focus, and this month, be sure to check out the hilariously violent Fist of the North Star for PS and From's highly unique Kuri Kuri-Mix.*

DATABASE

WORLD REPUBLIC TOP TEN

* BASED ON GAMES SOLD OCTOBER 15 TO NOVEMBER 12

1. Mario Tennis GB	GBC	6. Tales of Phantasia	GB
2. Fever Sankyo Pachinko	PS2	7. Custom Robo V2	N64
3. Dragon Quest VII	PS	8. Hunter X Hunter	PS
4. Fist Of The North Star	PS	9. Mysterious Dungeon Furai no Siren2	PS
5. Perfect Dark	N64	10. Moto GP	PS2

11. Koro Koro Kirby GB
12. Mario Tennis 64 N64
13. World Soccer-Winning Eleven 2000 PS2
14. Eternal Arcadia DC
15. Gekikyukan Pro Baseball PS2

FRONTLINES

WORLD REPUBLIC FRONTLINES

ROBODEX 2000

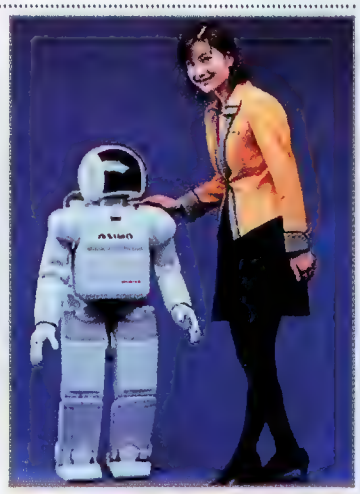
ROBODEX 2000, a robot convention held in Yokohama, Japan, featured astonishing robots on the bleeding edge of technology. Astoundingly, people flocked to the show floor, and as a matter of fact, those who wanted to come to the show had to wait four hours in line.

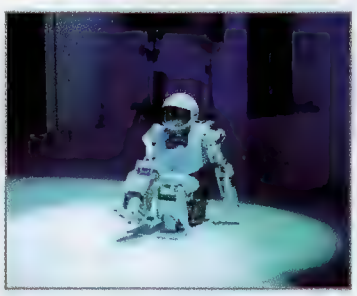
Among the robots exhibited at the show, Honda's ASIMO and Sony's SDR-3X were the ones getting most of the attention.

Honda's ASIMO (Advanced Step in Innovative Mobility) is 120 cm tall and weighs 43 kg. Its marvelously smooth movements are made possible by a newly developed system called i-WALK (Intelligent Real Time Flexible Walking), which enables the robot to change its center of gravity in advance before its next move is engaged.

Sony's SDR-3X is less than half the size of ASIMO. It walks a bit awkwardly but can kick a soccer ball without falling. The robot's software architecture is based on OPEN-R, a program that enables the robot to self-learn and control its movements. OPEN-R was also used on AIBO. But SDR-3X has more actuators than AIBO, so the price of the robot is still out of reach for general consumers (it is said to be about the price of a car, but which one?).

During his keynote speech, Sony director Toshitada Doi said that he expects that the robot industry will surpass the PC industry in the next 10 to 30 years. Director Doi is also a big fan of "Atom the Iron Arm," a comic and animation series created by Osamu Tezuka, and he is planning to do something special on Atom's birthday in 2003. Imagine what will be available three years from now.





WORLD REPUBLIC ELECTRONICS WR 電気製品

PS2

playstation 2 / ps2

World Republic Preview • developer/publisher **koei** • available in japan **january**

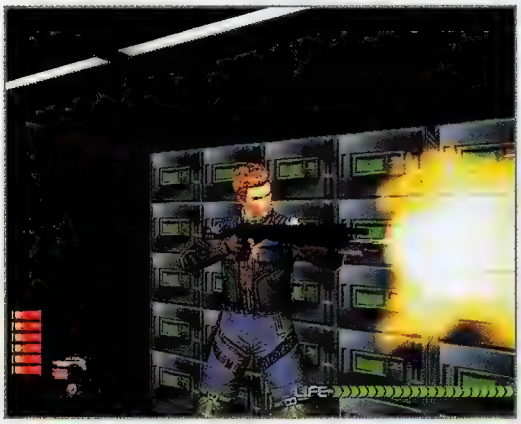
WINBACK

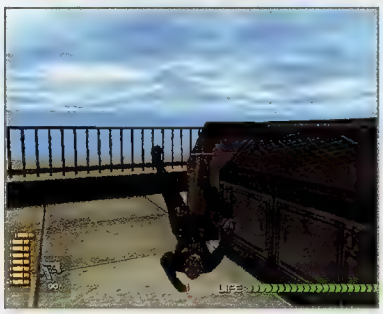
Koei is porting Winback, their third-person action game that originally appeared on Nintendo 64, to PlayStation 2. Released in October of 1999, Winback on N64 was not your typical action-shooter. The main character could perform over 350 different actions, and the third-person perspective fostered better control than in similarly styled first-person games. For the PS2 version, Koei has increased the character's action total to 450, with over 2,000 different animations. Despite the character's motion being so precise, the gameplay is simple enough for even an action-shooting beginner to enjoy.

For those of you who have never played the N64 version, here's a brief description of the world of Winback: You take on the role of Jean-Luc Couger, a special operative for an independent government agency called S.C.A.T. (Strategic Covert Action Team). A terrorist group called the Crying Lions has infiltrated the military satellite (Strategic Weapons System) GULF, which they begin using to cause destruction throughout the world. Since it needs to recharge for three to four hours between blasts, you have to "win back" the GULF before the Crying Lions can use it again. In addition to the story mode, there is also a four-player Vs. mode.

Koei has already shown their PS2 prowess with Kessen and Dynasty Warriors 2, so we expect the graphics for Winback to be much improved over its Nintendo 64 counterpart.

-jun sakai





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World Republic
Monthly Import Game Reviews
ワールド リパブリック
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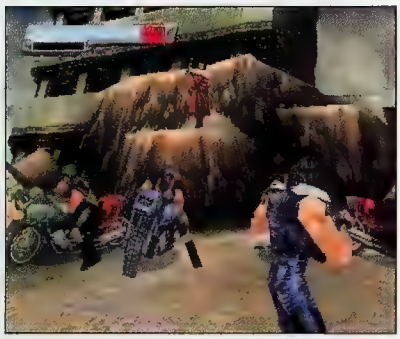
winback © koei 2000

playstation

World Republic Review • developer/publisher **bandai** • available in japan **now**

FIST OF THE NORTH STAR



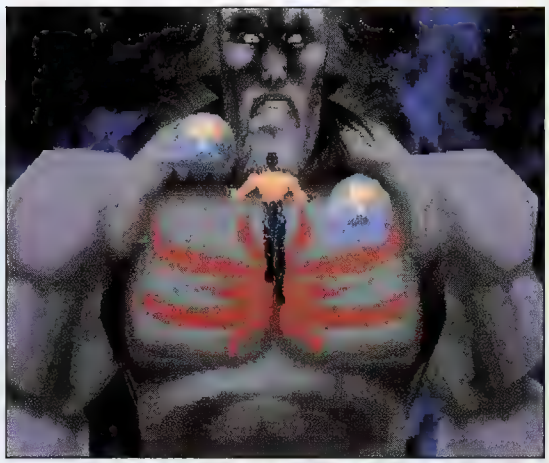
Fists fly, heads pop. In this post-apocalyptic world gone mad, one man, Ken, stands between the evil Shin and the people that would bring new life to the world. Betrayed by his brother, in fear of his power, and left for dead, Ken is seeking the ultimate justice—Shins death and the return of his beloved—and anyone that stands in his way meets a gruesome death. Once Ken lays a hand on you, it's inevitable: he's the Fist of Northstar, and as such, it's just a matter of a few seconds before you explode. No time to cry. Pop goes the bad guy. In no other game do so many die so quickly and so often.

Set in a Mad Max-like barren wasteland, this masterful PlayStation game follows the anime to the letter. As Ken, you travel from place to place in search of Shin, slaying all comers and helping those weak and in need along the way. Bandai makes this an interesting game by incorporating excellent real-time cinema with bone crunching fighting action. Ken can run, jump, perform wicked combos and take on hordes at a time with his awesome martial arts super skills. This is the 3D action game PS owners never got, until now. Fighting Force promised it, but fell flat. Now Bandai pulls out the big guns and delivers a great game based on a great anime. The

A) Buy this game and you'll know why we refer to him around here as the piss king. B) As a body pops into a bloody pulp, the entrails seem to hover before disintegrating. C) Like in the series, Ken walks alone, quietly, annoying no one, much like one grasshopper—only a lot deadlier. D) Vast real-time cinemas mimic the classic anime.

fist of the northstar © bandai 2000

WORLD REPUBLIC ELECTRONICS WR電気製品



graphics are excellent for PlayStation, with polys textured in such a way as to lend much definition to the characters, and the animation is first rate. What I like most of all, however, are the special attacks. Whenever you are about to defeat a key character, the screen will flash a series of fists pointing in different directions. By pressing the corresponding buttons, Ken unleashes his trademark mad fury followed by a cinema of the enemy slowly bursting into a mess of blood and gore. Anyone familiar with the legendary anime, or the awesome first action game for the Genesis, Last Battle, will want to add this import to their collector's case. It's hard to get but so worth the effort. **-D. HALVERSON**

B

Gamers' Republic GR12
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World Republic
Monthly Import Game Reviews
ワールド リパブリック
A 323-91

fist of the northstar © bandai 2000

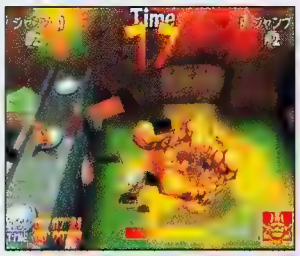
PS2 playstation 2 / ps2

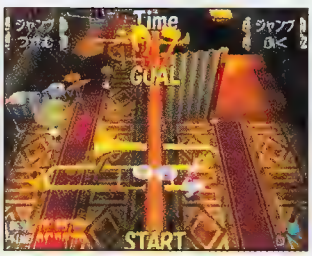
World Republic Preview • developer/publisher **from software** • available in japan **now**

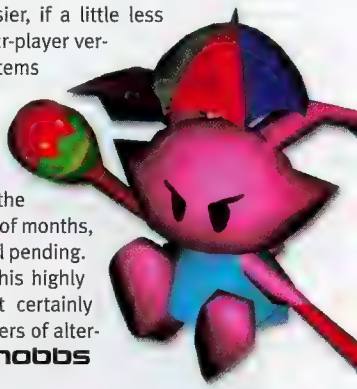
KURI KURI MIX

Every so often, and not nearly often enough, a truly original game comes along. And even less frequently does an original idea actually come off and prove to be fun and worthwhile of its innovation.

From Software's latest PS2 game, Kuri Kuri Mix, manages to achieve both originality and fun, with a mind-bending concept that forces you to play in an almost alien way. The main thrust of the idea is that you are controlling two characters at the same time, one controlled by the left analog stick, the other by the right. The goal of the game is to get both characters, which are separated from each other by a wall, to the end of a narrow, vertically scrolling environment. Various obstacles are placed along the way on both sides, and even though the characters are separated, they must work together to reach the end. This can involve tasks as simple as pressing a switch on one side to raise a platform on the other, or as complex and cooperative as guiding a moving mine cart by activating switchbacks. And all the while, there is a sense of tension, for if you leave either character standing still for too long, an enemy will float into frame, looking to pick you up and sap valuable time away. So even as you are trying to work out a particular puzzle, you've got to keep the other character moving around. This is when you feel your brain being split in two, a hint of schizophrenia setting in. But it's such an interesting concept that you put up with a little bit of initial frustration. Naturally, a two-player mode makes things a bit easier, if a little less unique, but there is also a two- to four-player versus mode that throws weapons and items into the mix as you battle to collect the most number of stars before reaching the goal.







From Software plans to release Kuri Kuri Mix in the States within the next few of months, but a domestic name is still pending. But whatever it's called, this highly original game will almost certainly find a following among lovers of alternative games. **-mike hobbs**

PS2 playstation 2 / ps2

World Republic Preview • developer / publisher **from software** • available in japan **march 2001**

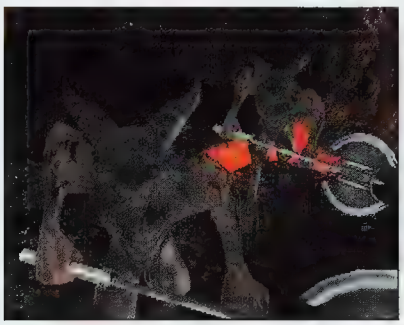
KING'S FIELD

From Software's flagship series, King's Field, is being prepped for the PS2, and is currently set to be released in spring 2001 after a long silence. King's Field was From Software's debut title for PS, and three sequels have been released thus far.

According to From Software, the game concept is based on seven elements: nothingness, solitude, quietness, coldness, dampness, shadow, light and darkness. And to infuse these concepts into the play, the game includes various places and effects for maximum enhancement.

As far as the game itself, it is said to be very non-linear, and there is no specific order to the events that you experience. As before, it is a first-person, 3D real-time RPG, and according to producer Nishida, "We felt that the game world was too large in III, so this PS2 version will be between II and III in terms of size, and it'll be more adventure rather than a riddle-solving game. And the difficulty level will be less than that of Eternal Ring."

Although the company claims that the game is not graphically intensive, it already looks promising. King's Field is an acquired taste, so let's hope this latest in the series is more than just a visual and atmospheric journey. **-jun sakai**



kuri kuri mix © from software 2000 king's field © from software 2000.

dreamcast/ dc

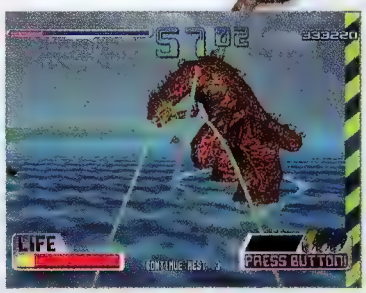
World Republic Preview • developer **cri** • publisher **sims** • available in japan **january**

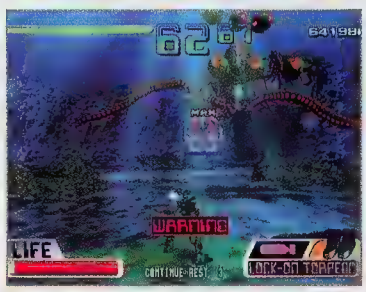
CHARGE'N BLAST

Charge'N Blast, as its name might suggest, is action gaming at its most basic. It consists of charging a weapon, blasting hoards of grotesque monsters, and occasionally dodging incoming attacks. I suppose it would therefore be more appropriately titled Charge'N Blast'N Dodge, but I digress. Despite its simplicity, however, the game has a certain House-of-the-Dead-meets-Panzer-Dragoon appeal. The atmosphere is more reminiscent of HotD, complete with laughably bad English voice acting, while the lock-on system for certain weapons brings back fond memories of Team Andromeda's classics. Whether the game as a whole manages to measure up to either of those masterpieces remains to be seen.

Totally void of power-ups or weapon upgrades, the only strategy involved with Charge'N Blast is in choosing your character. There are three of them, and each comes equipped with a set of two standard weapons and one special. John Dawn has long-range multiple rockets, Nicholas Woods launches powerful grenades, and Pamela Hewitt sports a highly effective multiple laser. Before firing any of these weapons, you must press its corresponding button (X, Y, or B) and wait a second or two for it to charge. This is clearly the focus of the game, as the only movement involved is dodging left and right (via the L and R triggers, naturally). It takes a while to get used to not being able to fire constantly, but it's an interesting twist on the third-person shooter.

In terms of visuals, these aren't exactly the Dreamcast's finest. Many of the textures are muddy, the level architecture is simplistic, and the explosion effects leave a bit to be desired. On the other hand, most of the monsters look fairly amazing, especially the bosses. My personal favorite is the giant, lumbering Godzilla clone in stage two. Each boss has a shield generator that must be destroyed before they can be damaged, but many of the encounters are still too easy. Although the gameplay remains consistent throughout, the game's locales are quite varied. There's a city street, a beachfront, a small town, and even an underwater site. As it should be in all action games, you can grab a friend and explore these levels together. There is some harsh slowdown during two-player games in our preview version, but that will hopefully be remedied before the game ships. I'd also like to see something added to shake things up a bit, as the game can become somewhat monotonous at times. It's a good dose of mindless twitch action, but a little more depth certainly couldn't hurt. Whatever happens, Infogrames will be bringing Charge'N Blast stateside sometime early next year.





-steve thomason

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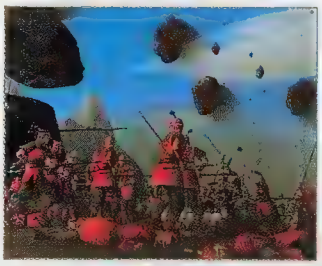
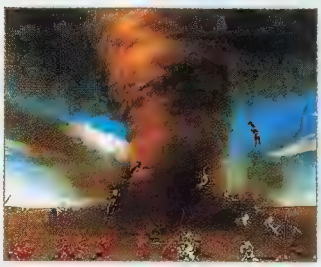
PS2 sony playstation 2 / ps2

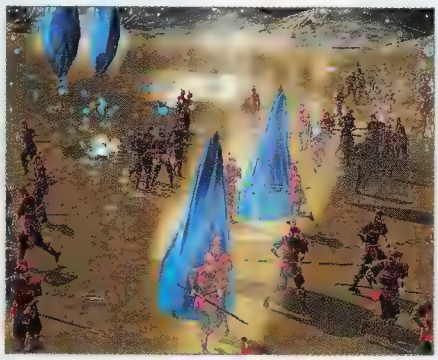
World Republic Preview • developer/publisher **koei** • available in japan **winter**

KESSEN II

Kessen, the game that let us experience the age of true battle, is coming back with more dynamic and dramatic elements in a sequel for PlayStation 2 this winter. In Kessen II, you play as the feudal lord Ryu-bi as he wages war against the powerful lord Sou-so in a crusade to rescue his beloved Chosen. Although loosely based on the time period of the Three Kingdoms, the story is completely fictional. There are several elements that generate more intensity in Kessen II over its predecessor. The first is a new Crowds Engine that can display 500 warriors in battle simultaneously—about five times more than the first game. Equally significant is the ability to use Yo-jutsu (ancient magic) and Scheme during a real-time battle scene. There are also castle and river stages this time around, and characters' facial expressions have been overseen by Kabuki (Japanese historical play) actors, trendy actresses, comedians, etc. Finally, full voice is used not only during cinematic sequences but also during tactics sessions and battles. As amazing as the first game looked, Kessen II appears to be even more of an achievement and should be an interesting mix of historical and fantastical elements. **-jun sakai**







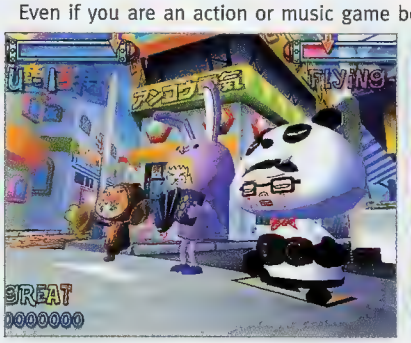
PS2 sony playstation 2 / ps2

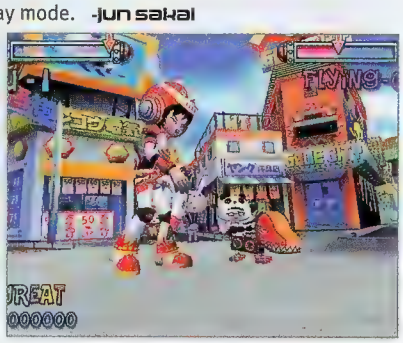
World Republic Preview • developer/publisher **koei** • available in japan **now**

GITAROO-MAN

Gitaroo-Man is Koei's original music action game that features character designs by renowned illustrator 326 (Mitsuru). The main character, U-1 (Yuichi) is a Gitarooist. A Gitaroo is a legendary instrumental weapon, and Gitarooists have the ability to transform into Gitaroo-Man.

Even if you are an action or music game beginner, don't worry: Koei has said that anyone can play this game easily since its control is so simple. Even so, you will be able to play music using a lot of technique once you become accustomed to the game. As for the type of music to be found, there are various styles such as pop, groove, and R&B. Gitaroo-Man also features a Vs. mode and Harmony (cooperative) play mode. **-jun sakai**





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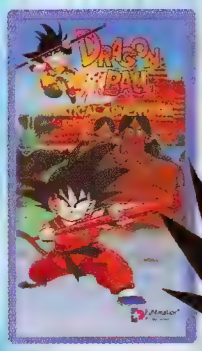

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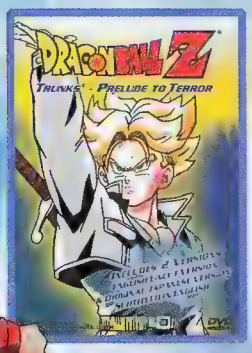

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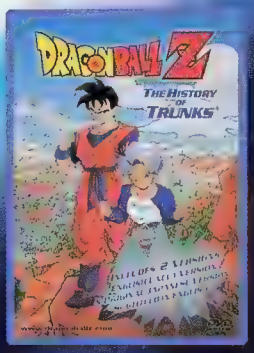
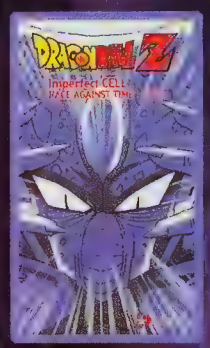
IMPERFECT CELL-DISCOVER



THE HISTORY OF TRUNKS



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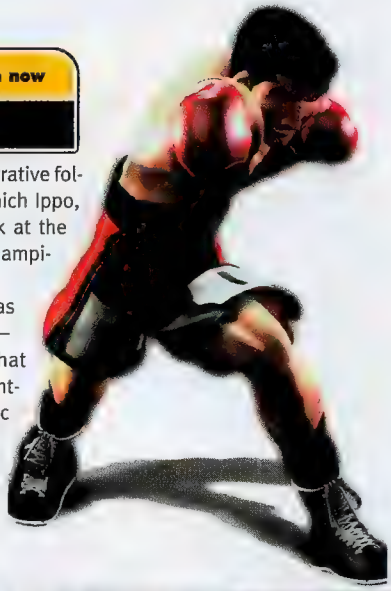
PS2 sony playstation 2 / ps2

World Republic Preview • developer **esp/koudansha** • publisher **esp** • available in japan **now**

HAJIME NO IPPO



Hajime no Ippo is a comic series created by George Morikawa that has been appearing in a weekly comic magazine published by Koudansha for more than 12 years. Starting this fall, an animated television series will also kick off. What has made the series such a long running success is that it depicts a realistic yet strong impression of what a boxer's life is like through tales of rivalry, friendship, and challenge.

Although simple to control, the Hajime no Ippo game replicates the dynamics of boxing nicely, including the use of graceful footwork and combinations of different attacks. The analog stick controls defensive maneuvers such as ducking and footwork, and all the offensive moves are done with buttons, including L1 and R1. So after dodging or ducking an opponent's punch, you can easily and intuitively hit him with, for example, a right or left hook. Basic offense includes jabs, straight punches, uppercuts, and hooks, but by combining punches with the R2 button, your attack changes from a conventional jab or straight punch to a body blow or uppercut, depending on the position or posture of your character. Also, just like in real boxing, when you press certain buttons while moving the analog stick you can cause more damage to your opponent by getting more weight behind the punch.

The game includes both a story mode and Vs. mode. In story mode, the narrative follows the original storyline in which Ippo, the main character who is weak at the beginning, decides to become champion.

So far, only one boxing title has been released for DC and PS2—Ready 2 Rumble. Although that game is fun, it was a disappointment for those craving a realistic boxing bout. Hopefully, Hajime no Ippo – Victorious Boxers will bring us the intensity of boxing in the virtual environment.

-jun sakai

PS2 sony playstation 2 / ps2

World Republic Preview • developer /publisher **bandai** • available in japan **now**

GUNDAM

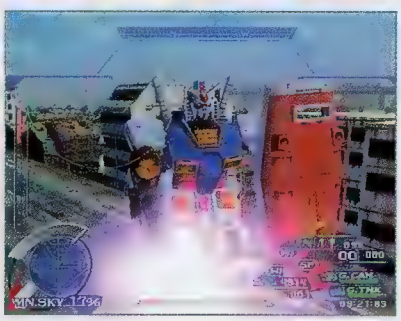
It should be a good...no, it should be a great experience to get into the Mobile Suit Gundams and fight with Char the Red Comet. Chivalry with rivalry was what made the viewers excited about the battle between Amro and Char on the hit anime series. Not only that, but all the mobile suits—Zaku, Gouf, and Dom – the Zion empire brought into the war were irresistibly good looking, which made us like them even though they were enemy characters.

If you missed our previous coverage of Mobile Suit Gundam, here's a recap: this PS2 title will be Bandai's first 3D action game based on the original Gundam animation series. Immersing players into the One Year War between the Federation and the Zion empire, one of the game's highlights will be newly created, high-quality animation totaling 40-plus minutes. The animation sequences are being specially re-created to surpass the quality of the box office version of Gundam - every part is minutely drawn, with lighting that gives each character an awesome presence.

Bandai has tried to keep the controls simple. Changing weapons and locking on are easily executed with a single button press. Also, it's easy to change the point of view while moving, even while dashing and jumping, so even players not familiar with mech games can jump right into the action. Just like in the anime, you can even attack numerous enemy mobile suits at the same time.

Not much else can be said now, but it definitely looks like it will be a hit with anime and robot fans. Check out these new pics and look forward to more in a future issue.

-jun sakai



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STREET FIGHTER ALPHA

REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON
•2000 MANGA ENTERTAINMENT
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★★ 1/2 ACTION/ADVENTURE

Endearment for Capcom's Street Fighter franchise runs deeper than a mere affinity for the greatest fighting game series of all time. The character designs, storylines, music, and especially the incredible art help suck all comers into the universe as if it were a deep RPG rather than a decade-old fighting franchise. As such, Street Fighter has been the subject of many a commercial venture, with an emphasis placed, disappointingly, more on exploiting it for cash than doing the game justice. The abysmal motion picture, accompanied by an insulting game spin-off, made our stomachs churn, a decent (at best) initial anime feature and low budget Japanese TV series fell far short of expectations, and the U.S. cartoon was an outright catastrophe. On the plus side, ReSaurus released a beautiful action figure line, but the curse followed: the company with the best-looking figures on the planet happens to have the worst track record in the toy biz. The series 2 figures still haven't shown up.

In commemoration of Street Fighter's ten-year anniversary, the franchise is finally getting the respect it deserves via Capcom, Bandai, and Manga. When people remember Street Fighter (if it ever dies), it should be for two things: the games—their legendary hand-drawn graphics, fluid animation and groundbreaking control schemes—and this brilliantly depicted anime, *Street Fighter Alpha the Movie*. The story has many layers, including the mysterious appearance of Ryu's younger brother, Shun; Akuma's treachery as the lord of the Dark Hadou (and Ryu's struggle not to fall into the same dark fate); and Shadowlaw's ultimate scheme to absorb the Street Fighters' powers to rule the world. Intertwined, Rose's relationship with Ryu as a mysterious spirit guide, Sakura's fascination with Ryu, Ken's undying loyalty, and Chun Li's search for the truth combine with inspired cameos to shape an overall plot that will have Street Fighter loyalists heaving sighs of relief and jubilation. Great characters just keep showing up like Vega, Zangief, Birdie, Dhalsim, and Adon, and they are all drawn to perfection using the trademark thick black outlines and exaggerated features (such as Ryu's large hands and feet) that have been missing in every other SF production. And for once, the soundtrack lives up to the visuals, sounding more like a big-budget theatrical release and less like a generic video-game clone. But most of all, the greatest pleasure will be derived by the many spectacular fighting scenes, which are simply brilliant in every way, from the beautiful animation to the amazing angles and special effects. We don't have to wait at all for the action to start, and once it does, it is balanced perfectly with the excellent and well-written drama. Manga has done an admiral job with the dubbing too, delivering one of their best in years.

As sequels go, *Street Fighter Alpha the Movie* far exceeds its predecessor, and as a video-game-derived anime, it now stands at the top of the class along side ADV's *Sin*. GR

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CARD CAPTOR SAKURA DVD VOL. 1

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 PIONEER ENTERTAINMENT
100 MINUTES • ENGLISH SUBBED
★★★★ FANTASY/ADVENTURE

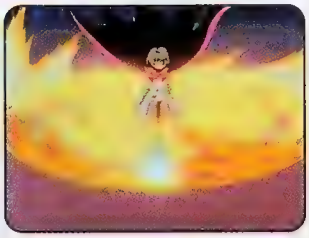
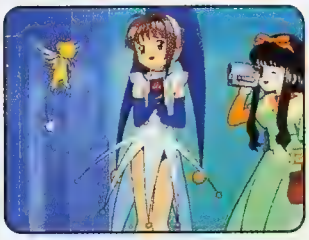
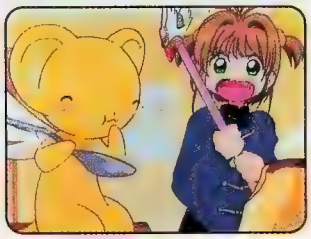
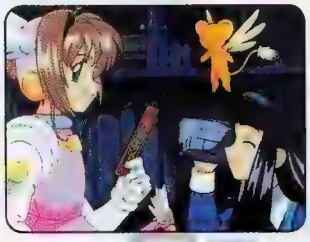
Let's start off by saying that this is *not* the awful, butchered version that we all saw on Saturday morning cartoons. If this has been your only experience with *Card Captor Sakura*, then you must attempt to rid the horrid experience from your mind and make a fresh start.

CC Sakura keeps the standards that Clamp has created as high as ever. Sakura Kinomoto is a normal fourth-grade girl with an older brother in high school. One day, Sakura stumbles across a book called "The Clow." This magical tome contains a set of tarot-like cards and a small guardian, Kerberos. Kerberos looks more like Unico than a protector really. Sakura accidentally loses all of the Clow cards in the book except one and awakens Kerberos. Kero charges Sakura with finding, capturing and returning all the Clow cards back into his protection. And so a Card Captor is born.

Each card has a magical property that must be overcome with the use of another card. Sakura is unsure of herself at first, but with the help of her best friend and Kero, she is willing to try to find all the cards.

Where the American version of *CC Sakura* was made to cater to people ages 10 and under, the proper version of this anime will appeal to all age groups. *Sakura* has an enjoyable story, Clamp character designs, and solid animation. Realizing the number of people who will never watch the real *CC Sakura* because of the recent American TV rendition, I am positive someone needs to suffer for this crime against anime.

GR

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TENAMONYA VOYAGERS DVD VOL. 1

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO
•2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT
100 MINUTES • BI-LINGUAL
★★★★ FANTASY/COMEDY

When you find yourself burned out from the grim and dour of more dramatic anime, it's refreshing when something like Bandai's *Tenemonya Voyagers* dedicates everything it's got towards making you chuckle. Using an assortment of racy sexual imagery, some surprisingly effective big-budget mech battle scenes, and regularly hilarious dialogue, *Tenamonya*'s premise—three women vs. the universe (sort of a big action *Thelma and Louise* meets *Bonnie*)—is a fantastic-looking parody of just about every serious anime you've ever seen. The story is a running joke. Trapped on the wrong side of the galaxy due to school budget cuts, teacher Ayako and student Wakana (from Earth) are unwitting allies in helping—get this—Space Trash Parilla, the 18 year old female leader of a notorious intergalactic mafia, reach home in order to take advantage of a legal loophole absolving her of all crimes. Chased by both the mob and a bad-ass (read: psycho) female cop with a destruction lust, the sometimes quirky, maybe sexy, but always crazy trio pokes fun at everything from *Macross* to *Arcadia of My Youth* with visual ribbing and outright plagiarizing of scenes that manage to lampoon and pay homage to their inspirations in the same outrageous gag.

Produced by Bandai Visual and Studio Pierrot, the *Tenamonya Voyagers* DVD contains all four episodes of this short-lived series, managing to create a sort of cult following due to its exceptional budget (each episode looks like a high-cost OVA) and winning characterization. Add in that this series is funny as hell, even if you're like me and hate anime comedy, and *Tenemonya Voyagers* becomes one of the few must-own anime that deserves the DVD format, even if looking at the girls with big mechs and skimpy clothes is a guilty pleasure. **GR**

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Gundam Wing Endless Waltz © Sotsu Agency • Sunrise

WINGS OF HONNEAMISE DVD

REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON
•2000 MANGA ENTERTAINMENT
125 MINUTES • BI-LINGUAL
★★★★★ ADVENTURE/DRAMA

As anime continues to grow and become more mainstream in America, the contribution of DVD technology plays an ever-vital role in turning on a new generation to some of the epics that helped get us here. Most of the truly great achievements in animation took place before the introduction of modern techniques, such as CG integration and digital animation. These anime are painstakingly hand drawn, making them true labors of love, and that charm shines through in a way that leaves an indelible mark on the viewer, regardless of their knowledge or involvement in anime or animation. One such work and a big reason I came to love anime so much is Hiroyuki Yamaga's 1987 epic *The Wings of Honneamise*, the tale of a world not unlike our own and its saga surrounding launching a man into space. Covering the gamut of human emotion—love, duty, honor, humility, perseverance, greed—along with political conspiracy, *Wings* takes us on a wonderful excursion as we follow cadet Shiro Lhadatt and his transformation from a lazy hanger-on to a hero with the odds stacked heavily against him.

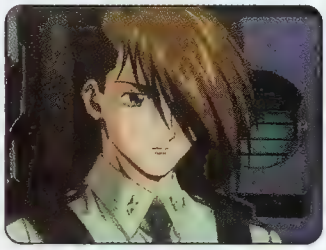
Wings is as much a visual feast as it is an intellectual one, containing some of the most incredible character and ship designs ever devised, and architecture that is indescribably visionary and breathtaking. Brought to vivid life through Disney-quality animation, a soundtrack that will stir your soul and superb voice acting, *Wings* stretches beyond the parameters of mere entertainment, reaching towards something on a much more personal level. If ever an anime warrants being referred to as magical, the *Wings of Honneamise* deserves such praise. This digitally remastered DVD presentation features rare deleted scenes and perhaps the greatest bonus ever, the amazing story of how Gainax came to be. Witness the four-minute emotionally charged short created by Yamaga's team (who would go on to form Gainax) that prompted Bandai to green flag the eight-million-dollar budget needed for *Wings*—the largest ever for an animated feature at the time. **GR**

GUNDAM WING: ENDLESS WALTZ

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT
85 MINUTES • ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★★ SCI-FI/ACTION/MECHA

I really wish that the entire *Gundam Wing* series looked and felt like *Endless Waltz*. With superior art, animation and story compared to the regular series, *Endless Waltz* makes *Gundam W* go out with style. *Gundam* stories are notorious for being not only tangled, but almost as sluggish as *Dragonball Z*. Just when you thought it was safe to put away your Gundams and live peacefully...

Treize Kushrenade had some offspring that very few people know of. Her name is Marimae, and someone is very determined to put this young girl on the colony throne. Marimae is convinced that she has divine right to rule and that all should bow before her. She has Relena kidnapped in order to help give her seizure of power more authority. Relena has, by this point, grown up quite a bit into a young and very important diplomat.



Unfortunately, Heero, Duo and Quatre have just sent four of the Gundams off to the proverbial scrap pile, as there was no further use for those giant machines of war. The last thing they need is for another war to start.

Endless Waltz brings the five pilots back together as friends and enemies for one last push for peace between Earth and the colonies. If you haven't seen the entire *Gundam Wing* series, then *Endless Waltz* will be very confusing. However, this last movie almost makes it worth sitting through the regular TV series. **GR**

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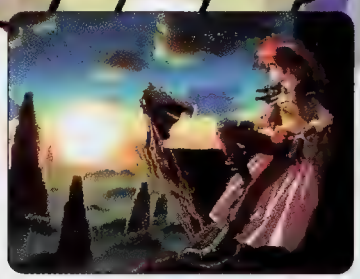
SLAYERS: THE BOOK OF SPELLS DVD

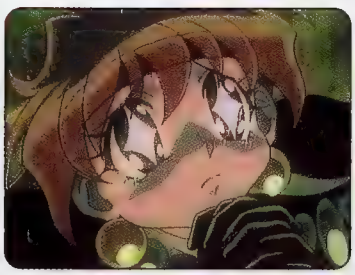
REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 ADV FILMS ENTERTAINMENT
75 MINUTES • BI-LINGUAL
★★★1/2 FANTASY/ACTION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY

Lina Inverse hasn't always traveled with Gourry. For a small amount of time before she met up with her blonde-haired, squid-brained companion, Lina traveled with Naga the Serpent. Naga and Lina are rivals of a sort. Naga wishes she had Lina's strength in the magical arts, while Lina wishes she had Naga's mammarial fortitude. Lina has, after all, always been a little challenged in the breast department.

This DVD is a compilation of the three *Slayers* adventures that have already been released by ADV starring Lina and Naga. So if you haven't already bought any of them, this is a great place to start your *Slayers* addiction.

There is an old mad scientist named Dior, who is intent on using Lina in one of his projects and turning her into a chimera. In this process, Lina's powerful DNA would be spliced with the DNA of two dragons making for a ridiculously powerful, and just plain old ridiculous, combination. Lina abhors this idea, as she is afraid that people would die of laughter before they died of any sort of magical spells she may cast as a chimera. Dior realizes that capturing Lina against her will is slightly easier than making the Earth rotate backwards, so he decides that he needs a few clones to help get the job done. Who better to clone than Naga? Unfortunately, 10 Nagas around is far, *far* scarier than any Lina/Dragon amalgam. **GR**



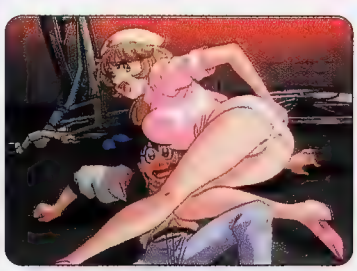


NEW CUTEY HONEY DVD VOL. 1&2

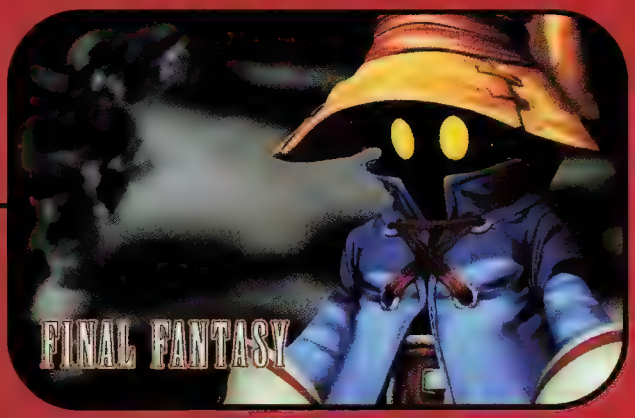
REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 ADV FILMS ENTERTAINMENT
120 MINUTES PER VOLUME• BI-LINGUAL
★★★ ACTION/ADVENTURE

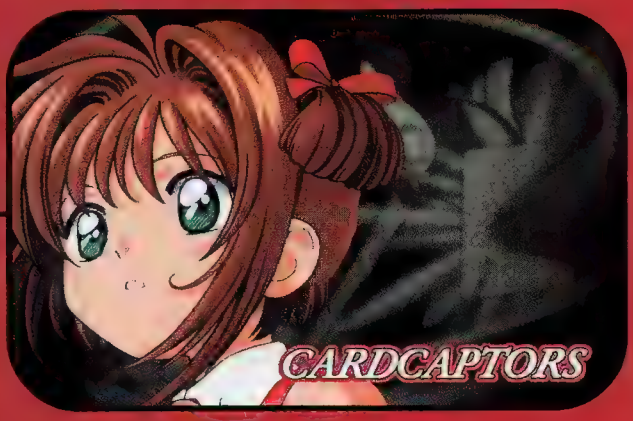
Honestly, this is the second time I have seen this anime; the first time I didn't like it. I abhor most things that come into contact with Go Nagai, except for *Devilman* (don't ask). Go Nagai did not direct *Cutey Honey*, but this was distinctly his creation. Anyway, time has passed, and so I gave it another try. *Cutey Honey* has actually started to grow on me. Kind of like *Charlie's Angels*. Like the recent cinema flick, *Cutey Honey* manages to be fun despite the blatant T&A shots.

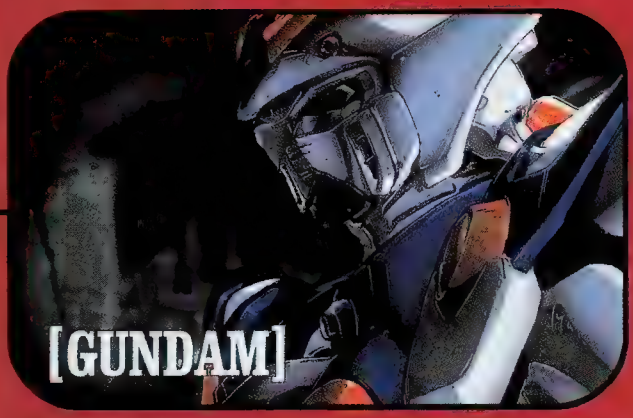
The city where Chokkei Hayami lives is infested with crime. To make things worse, the criminals here often have the ability to turn themselves into demons. While Chokkei is attending a speech by the mayor, a crime boss attempts to force the city into submission. However, there is a tale of a woman warrior who has great skill in battle and it is rumored that the Mayor's secretary, Honey Kisaragi, is the one. Unfortunately, Honey can't remember anything about her past. She soon discovers that she is really Cutey Honey, a battle android with the hidden power to assume any female form. Honey uses her different forms to take on different abilities and to disguise herself if need be.



Cutey Honey is about as anime as proverbial anime can get. With the main character doing the magical "Sailor Moon, Devil Hunter Yoko etc..." costume change, this is really nothing any fan hasn't already seen before. **GR**







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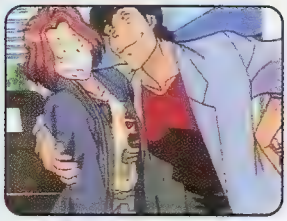
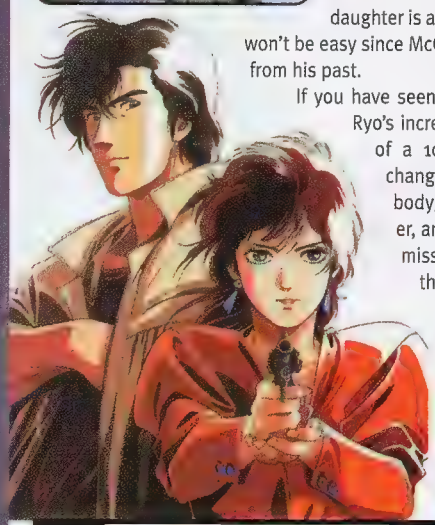
CITY HUNTER OVA: SECRET SERVICE VOL. 5

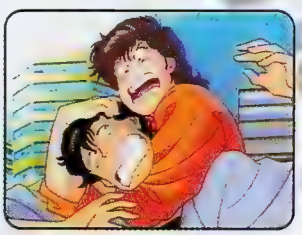
REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 ADV FILMS ENTERTAINMENT
90 MINUTES • ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★ ACTION/COMEDY

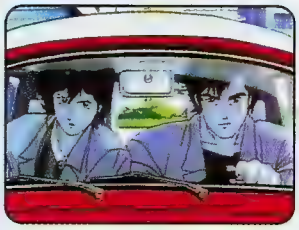


Ryo Saeba's infamous reputation can get him close to the most important people in Japan. Ryo and Kaori are seemingly hired to guard an important diplomat, Mr. McGuire, after he received a threatening phone call. Mr. McGuire was a freedom fighter and political prisoner for his country, and now he wants to be elected democratically by its citizens. Once the City Hunter pair meet McGuire at the Diet building, they discover that McGuire really wants them to guard his daughter. McGuire's estranged daughter is a secret service agent, who has no idea her life is in danger. Ryo's job won't be easy since McGuire seems intent on keeping horrible secrets from his past.



If you have seen *City Hunter* before, then you know the drill: Ryo's incredible gun prowess and Kaori's healthy usage of a 100-ton mallet. Ryo's doggy ways have not changed a bit, as he spends most of his time as a bodyguard rummaging through an underwear drawer, and spouting bad poetry. However, Ryo's nookie mission has as much of a chance of succeeding as the silly rabbit's chances are of getting those damn Trix. Kaori always seems to show up just in time to cram her mallet up Ryo's nose and stop him from getting his hands on some poor unsuspecting female's goodies. Ryo then usually spends his nights tied to a giant log thinking about his transgressions against the female population. This man will never get any. **GR**

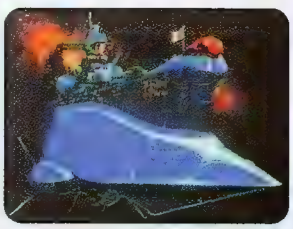




シティハンター

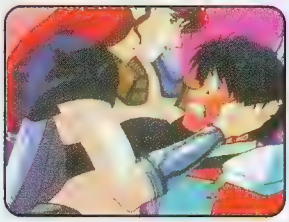
IRRESPONSIBLE CAPTAIN TYLOR OVA VOL. 1-3

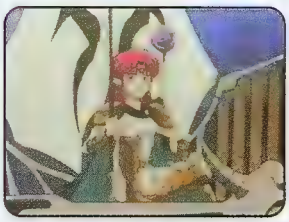
REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 THE RIGHT STUFF INTERNATIONAL
210 MINUTES • ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★1/2 FANTASY/COMEDY



For those of you unfamiliar with *Captain Tylor*, here's a bit of background: Justy Tylor is basically an idiot who stumbles into being the captain of a space warship, the Soyokaze. He has no experience and no clue, yet his incredible luck always brings him out on top. Tylor's crew has little to no respect for him, because they always seem to witness this amazing luck first hand. The idea has been done before you say? Well yes, but *Captain Tylor* is actually funny.

The UPSF is at war with the Raalgon Empire, but the empire's Empress Azalyn would rather go on a vacation than fight with the humans anymore. On the other side of space, Tylor has been called in by the top brass to personally oversee a secret mission. The mission is tantamount to committing suicide as the crew of Soyokaze has very little chance of surviving. The Raalgon empire has developed a new weapon that may just win them the war, and Tylor and the Soyokaze must take it out. Tylor has other plans, though. As a personal friend of Empress Azalyn, perhaps he can find a more peaceful way to end the war. Throughout this mission, Tylor is forced to listen and understand what his crew really thinks of him and his tactics. This in turn forces Tylor to think about his actions before he goes through with them. **GR**

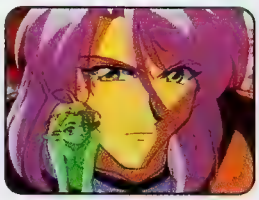




NIGHTWALKER

BY SHOJI AKINNUSO
• 2000 CENTRAL PARK MEDIA • 100 MINUTES • ENGLISH DUBBED
★★

Are they serious? Surely Central Park Media doesn't expect this completely cheesy rip-off of *Vampire Hunter D*—in this case, a vampire that creates swords of blood in his spare time as a detective—to be any more appealing than the horrible *Forever Knight* (a failed U.S. live-action show with the same premise) or even—at best—lukewarm *Buffy* spin-off, *Angel* (again, same premise). The creature-of-the-night-turned-good schtick wouldn't be so bad if the art and animation weren't so horribly generic. Ditto for the plot: bad demon guys possess living creatures in the bloodiest way, and it's up to our boy the Vampire Cop to stop them. Equipped with the stock sarcastic personality in tow, *Midnight Walker*'s few moments of levity fall flatter than the boring '80s-looking action that frames it. Poor acquisition Central Park Media. Fans can save themselves some bucks. **GR**



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GAMERS' REPUBLIC EDITORS' TOP 5

D. Halverson	S. Akinnuso	C. Alexander
1. Spriggan **ADV**	1. Cowboy Bebop **Bandai**	1. Wings Of Honneamise **Manga**
2. Wings Of Hommeamise **Manga**	2. Blue Submarine **Bandai**	2. Card Captor Sakura **Pioneer**
3. Street Fighter Alpha **Manga**	3. Samurai-X **ADV**	3. Silent Mobius **Anime Village**
4. Princess Mononoke **Miramax**	4. Escaflowne **Bandai**	4. Rurouni Kenshin **ADV**
5. A.N. Nanako **Pioneer**	5. Arcadia Of My Youth **AnimEigo**	5. I.C. Tylor OVA **Right Stuff**

anime top 5

presented by bandai entertainment and gamers' republic

READERS' TOP 5

1. Card Captor Sakura (un-cut) **Pioneer**
2. Cowboy Bebop **Bandai**
3. Neon Genesis Evangelion **ADV Films**
4. Fushigi Yuugi **Pioneer**
5. Amazing Nurse Nanako **Pioneer**

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To enter the Bandai Entertainment/Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime Contest, simply send us a list of your favorite five anime, new or old. Make sure to include your name, address and age and send it to: **Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, suite 218, Westlake Village, CA 91361**, or e-mail our venerable leader at **dhalverson@gamersrepublic.com**. First prize will receive: A Saber Marionette J DVD vol. 1-3, Saber Marionette J Promotional Poster, Saber Marionette J Authentic Animation Cel, Limited Saber Marionette J postcard, and a 1-year subscription to Gamers' Republic. Runners-up will receive: A Saber Marionette J DVD vol. 1, Limited Saber Marionette J postcard, and a 1-year subscription to GR. Good luck everyone!

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Once again the Page is Turned...

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TOY ICONOCLASM

FEWTURE

From the left: Just in time for the Christmas chopping season, meet Guillotinna; next meet the witch most likely to be invited to a sleep over at Ken's pad while Barbie's working, Noctilica; and, finally, ladies and gentlemen, Mrs. Marilyn Manson (sorry Rose). No, actually it's Phantiana, a woman that loves to dress up naughty and play with organs. These fine ultra-detailed beauties can be yours. From Fewture models, they're available now through banzaianime.com.

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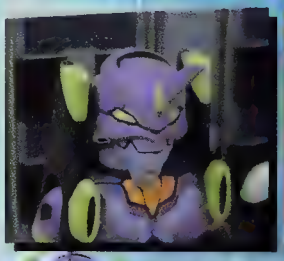

KUBRICKS

These little block heads are all the rage right now. Kubricks mimic your favorite anime and pop culture icons, stand on cool dioramas, and are highly collectible. Although they're flying out of stores in Japan faster than you can say "Pikachu," they are available here in the U.S. through banzaianime.com so if you like Evangelion, Gigantor, Planet of the Apes, or VOTOMS squared, don't hesitate. They'll go kicky fast!

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PALISADES SEGA Dreamcast

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Coming Winter 2000

• XDREAM

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DESIRABILITY:

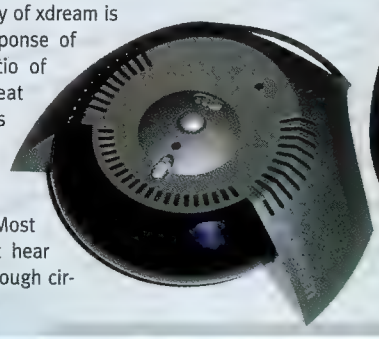
It is normal to pump up the volume when you are playing games, listening to music, or watching your favorite movies. But unless you are fortunate enough to live in soundproof room, a large house, or out in the middle of nowhere, you have to be thoughtful about the level of sound that you might be inflicting on your neighbors.

But wouldn't it be great if you could play your music, movies, and games at a sound level that you find satisfying without worrying about being reproached or demurred? One solution is xdream, a wireless headphone system that is to be available Spring 2001 from FreeSystems, a Singapore-based company.

xdream is the first pair of headphones ever to use 2Mbps wireless digital transmission via infrared. Like other wireless headphone systems, xdream comes with a set of wireless headphones and base unit that connects easily to home audio systems or your PC. Nothing new here, except that the sound quality of xdream is unprecedented. With a frequency response of 20Hz-20KHz and a signal-to-noise ratio of 90db, xdream delivers listeners great sound experiences; no other wireless product can match its sound quality. It gives you a crisp sound from low to high frequencies, and even sounds better than most cabled headphones. Most impressive is the fact that you don't hear hissing that is caused by distortion through circuits and analogue transmission, which is easily noticeable in other infrared wireless products.

The headphones themselves are ergonomically designed and weigh an acceptably light 310g, so you can comfortably wear them for long hours. Plus, if you desire, an unlimited number of headsets can be used for listening at the same time.

When the final product is released, the system will feature an optical input in addition to the USB and RCA jacks, making it perfect for use with the PS2. **-J. Sakai**



GR GEAR

• EMARKER

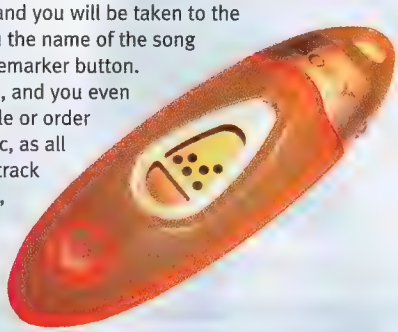
SONY • www.emarker.com • RETAIL: $19.99

DESIRABILITY:

Sony's inexpensive, clever emarker solves a common and often infuriating problem that nearly all of us can relate to. How many times have you tuned into your favorite radio station only to catch the end of a great song, left to forever wonder what it was? Such twentieth century frustrations are now a thing of the past. Now, with Sony's emarker in hand, you simply press a button when you hear a song you like.

Once home, you plug the emarker directly into your PC's USB port (Mac support should be available now) and you will be taken to the emarker website, where it tells you the name of the song that was playing when you hit the emarker button. Artist information is also displayed, and you even have the ability to listen to a sample or order the album online. But it's not magic, as all the emarker actually does is keep track of the time you pressed the button, and from a database of local stations, it will figure out what was playing at any one time.

-M. Hobbs



• CYBIKO

CYBIKO • www.cybiko.com • RETAIL: $130

DESIRABILITY:

The idea of a PDA designed for the younger set is a good one, and the Cybiko wireless intertainment system's kitchen-sink approach is sure to appeal to its target audience. Using 900 Mhz send and receive capabilities, you can chat and play games against other Cybiko users within a 150-300 foot radius, and of course the unit can store scores of addresses, phone numbers, and other personal bits of information. And through the use of serial connection, you can connect to a PC and download free games from the Cybiko website and even read and compose e-mail. Unfortunately, the system's miniscule keyboard, which forces you to type with a plastic stylus, seriously hampers its ergonomic effectiveness. **-M. Hobbs**

PS2 PERIPHERALS BUYER'S GUIDE

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

DVD Master Remote

Interact • Retail: $19.99

Desirability:

The DVD Master Remote does what it's supposed to—control the DVD features without messy wires, as well as your TV. The On-Off switch was screwy with our GXTV, but otherwise the remote functioned great. Although you have to plug in an infrared receiver, you can stick it in controller slot two so that you aren't constantly plugging and unplugging. There's also a $15 TV-incompatible version.

Mad Catz 8MB Memory Card

Mad Catz • Retail: $29.99

Desirability:

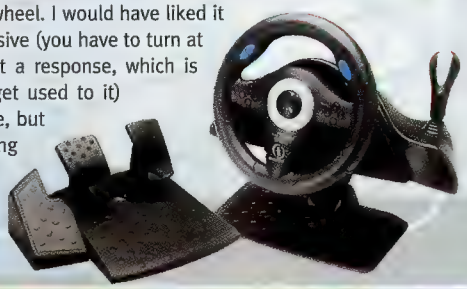
If you're like us at GR, you're probably a bit wary of off-brand memory cards, 'cause nothing's worse than losing that save file after 50 hours of play. But Mad Catz's 8MB Memory Card has been every bit as good as Sony's in the time we've been using it. This officially licensed product even comes in a variety of snazzy colors to choose from.

Blue Thunder Racing Wheel

Interact • Retail: $69.99

Desirability:

With its rubber grips, substantial foot pedals, extra shift lever and smooth buttons, the Blue Thunder is a solid, well-built racing wheel. I would have liked it to be a bit more responsive (you have to turn at least 30 degrees to get a response, which is problematic until you get used to it) and laptop use is a joke, but overall it makes playing racing games much more fun.



VF3 FX Steering Wheel

Performance • Retail: $49.99

Desirability:

Please tell me: why did the brake and gas pedals keep activating automatically? This intermittent problem kept coming up as I used the wheel, making it impossible at times to drive or even navigate menu screens. It works fine without the cheap-feeling pedals, but what's the fun in that? The wheel should have been more responsive, too.

Dual Impact 2

Performance • Retail: $24.99

Desirability:

If you're in dire need of an extra PS2 controller and can't spare the extra $10 for Sony's brand, then the Dual Impact 2 will work fine. It looks cheap, it feels chunky (especially the shoulder buttons), the analog sticks are a bit loose, and the directional pad is weird, but it gets the job done. Only for those on a budget.

Multiplayer Adaptor

Interact • Retail: $29.99

Desirability:

In our tests, the Multiplayer Adaptor worked every bit as good as Sony's PS2 multitap. All the ports and memory card slots function fine, and it costs $10 less. It's kind of big, and aesthetically, it's not too sleek, but it's what's inside that counts. Unfortunately, it isn't functional with PS1 games, but neither is Sony's.

Storm Chaser

Interact • Retail: $29.99

Desirability:

Aside from the funky directional pad and inconvenient select and start keys, the Storm Chaser feels good and works well too. The buttons have a solid feel and the analog sticks are nice and tight. But the real reasons to consider a Storm Chaser are the fully-functional extra features: turbo-fire, programmability and six-button layout. Street Fighter EX 3 players take note.

Retro Shock 2

Pelican • Retail: $19.99

Desirability:

I was all set to recommend the RS2 as *the* aftermarket PS2 controller to get, with its great rubberized grips, wonderful analog sticks and concise design that lets the pad rest comfortably in your hands. But then I tried using the directional pad and discovered it was just a bit sticky, especially for precision movement (fighting motions, gentle steering). Pelican was so close, too.

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX

Play as Slim Jim
In ProQuest Mode, at the Rider Selection Screen, enter: Down, Down, Left, Right, Up, Up, Y.

Open All Bikes
In ProQuest Mode, at the Bike Selection Screen, enter: Up, Left, Up, Down, Up, Right, Left, Right, Y.

Open All Levels
In ProQuest Mode, at the Level Select Screen, enter: Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Y.

Open All Styles
In ProQuest Mode, at the Style Selection Screen, enter: Left, Up, Right, Down, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Y.

Special Moves
Dave Mirra: Right, Up, Right, Right, Down, Down, Down
Slim Jim: Right, Up, Left, Left, Down, Right
Tim Mirra: Down, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up
Ryan Nyquist: Right, Right, Up, Right, Down, Down, Down, Right
Troy McMurray: Down, Down, Left, Left, Right, Right, Down
Chad Kagy: Up, Right, Down, Down, Up, Right, Left
Kenan Harkin: Right, Left, Up, Right, Left, Down
Joey Garcia: Left, Down, Right

Gradius III, IV

Instant Double Shot
The following code can only be used 25 times. First, pause the game then press Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, Square, Triangle.

Instant Laser Shot
The following code can only be used 25 times. First, pause the game then press Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, X, Circle.

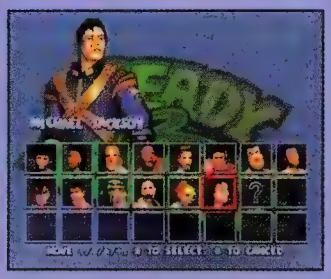
Ready 2 Rumble Round 2

Skinny Fighters
To play with a skinny fighter in Arcade Mode, first select a fighter then, during the Loading/Vs. screen, enter: Right, Right, Up, Down, Right, R1, R2. If performed correctly, you will hear a bell ring.

Zombie Fighters
To play with a zombie version of the fighter in Arcade Mode, first select a fighter then, during the Loading/Vs. screen, enter: Left, Up, Right, Down, R1, R1, R2. If performed correctly, you will hear a bell ring.

Overweight Fighters
To play with a fat fighter in Arcade Mode, first select a fighter then, during the Loading/Vs. screen, enter: Right, Right, Up, Down, Right, R1, R1, R2. If performed correctly, you will hear a bell ring.

Open Michael Jackson and Freak E. Deke
To open Michael Jackson and Freak E. Deke in the Arcade Mode, enter the following code at the Character Select screen: R1(x13), R2, R1(x10), R2. You will hear a bell confirming your selection.



Open Shaq, Cigar Bill, Hillary
To unlock Shaquille O'Neal complete Arcade Mode five times; Bill Clinton nine times; Hillary Clinton ten times.

Smuggler's Run

Gravity Trick
To change the gravity for hit ambient vehicles, which will make them float away, pause the game then enter: R1, R2, R1, R2, Up, Up, Up.

Another Gravity Trick
To change the gravity to real world gravity, which is half of what the cars use in the game, making them bounce and float more, pause the game then enter: L1, R1, R1, L2, R2, R2.

Decrease Time Warp
To slow down the time warp, pause the game then enter: R2, L2, L1, R1, Left, Left, Left. You can perform this three times.

Increase Time Warp
To speed up the time warp, pause the game then enter: R1, L1, L2, R2, Right, Right, Right. You can perform this three times.

INVISIBILITY
To make your car invisible, pause the game then enter: R1, L1, L1, R2, L1, L1, L2.

PS2 SSX

MAXIMUM ATTRIBUTES
To max out all of the character attributes, go to the Options Menu, hold all four shoulder buttons and enter: Circle(x5), X, Triangle, Square.

UNLOCK EVERYTHING
To open up all the courses, players, costumes and boards, go to the Options Menu, hold all four shoulder buttons and enter: Down, Left, Up, Right, X, Circle, Triangle, Square.

PS2 UNREAL TOURNAMENT

INVINCIBILITY
To become invincible, first pause the game then enter: Square, Circle, Left, Right, Circle, Square.

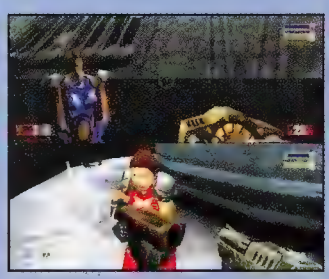
FULL AMMO
To get all the ammunition, first pause the game then enter: Left, Right, Circle, Circle, Circle, Right, Left.

LEVEL SELECT
To choose a particular level make sure you have a memory card and start and save a game in progress. Go to the Main Menu. Select the Resume Game option, select the saved game (only have one saved file) and enter: Up, Down, Down, Up, Left, Up, Right, Down. If performed correctly, you will be sent to the Select Ladder screen and all Ladders and Levels will be opened.

LEVEL SKIP
To skip to the next level, first pause the game then enter: Up, Down, Left, Right, Right, Left, Circle.

STEALTH MUTATOR
To unlock the Stealth Mutator, enabling cloaking devices, at the Main Menu enter: Square, Square, Circle, Circle, Square, Square, Circle, Circle. Select Multiplayer Mode and Stealth will now be an option.

FATBOY MUTATOR
To play with the Fatboy Mutator, at the Main Menu enter: Circle, Circle, Circle, Up, Down, Down, Up, Circle, Circle, Circle. Select Multiplayer Mode and Fatboy will now be an option where you will become fatter with frags and thinner when fragged.



JET GRIND RADIO

PLAY AS D.J. H:
To play as D.J. Professor K, you will need to have played to unlock Pirahna. Then choose to play as Pirahna and, while she's dancing, enter: A, Y, X, X, B, Y.

PS2 MOTO GP

RACE AS KLONOA
We know that this isn't an actual code, but it's just so damn cool that we had to include it. To race as Namco's Klonoa, you will need to complete Challenge #22, in Challenge Mode, in any difficulty and do it in 21 seconds.

BANJO-TOOIE

To use the following codes, you will have to already have the Grenade eggs in order to open the Mayahem Temple where you will input the following codes:

FEATHERS = carry twice as many feathers
EGGS = carry twice as many eggs
HONEYBACK = unlimited health
FALLPROOF = no damage when fall
HOMING = eggs target nearest enemy
GETJIGGY = Jiggy hits revealed in Master Jiggywiggy's house

Audiophiles

What GR is listening to this month

D. Halverson	B. Fiechter	M. Hobbs	C. Hoffman	Pooch
1. **GEDDY LEE** *my favorite headache*	1. **LAPDOG** *near tonight*	1. **THE ORB** *orbvs terrarvm*	1. **U2** *all that you can't leave...*	1. **DJ SHADOW** *endtroducing*
2. **VAST** *music for people*	2. **GHOST** *lost souls*	2. **RADIOHEAD** *kid a*	2. **MADONNA** *music*	2. **SCARFACE** *last of a dying breed*
3. **POE** *haunted*	3. **GLEN PHILLIPS** *abulum*	3. **YUTAKA SADO** *chabrier/ravel*	3. **THE MINIBOSSES** *the minibosses*	3. **FATBOY SLIM** *halfway between...*
4. **GHOST** *lost souls*	4. **POE** *haunted*	4. **MADONNA** *music*	4. **POWER STONE OS** *tetsuya shibata*	4. **SADE** *lovers rock*
5. **SCORPIONS** *berliner philharmonic*	5. **RADIOHEAD** *kid a*	5. **VANGELIS** *blade runner*	5. **MATCHBOX 20** *mad season*	5. **BLACK EYED PEAS** *bridging the gap*

Coming straight at ya, here is the rest of our recent conversation with Korn's Jonathan Davis. We talked a little bit about his music, current projects and everyday stuff. But the conversation kept coming full circle back to video games. It's a good thing, too, because otherwise I wouldn't have an article to submit! Jon and the guys are beginning to lay new tracks for their upcoming album, and he is composing original scores for two huge movie projects. Truth be told, there is a bunch of stuff he's in the process of doing, all on exciting and progressive levels. I'm just not sure if I can talk about them. Moving along...

Gamers' Republic: You're the lead singer, but do you write all of the songs? Or is it a collaboration of the whole group?

Jon: I do most of the lyric writing, but it's the whole band together. Munkey and Fieldy write a lot of stuff together and Brian and me sort of group together. Then we bring our ideas together at practice and rip all the shit apart. No matter who writes a song, it's split evenly. Everything is for the group.

GR: The sound and vibe created by you guys has transcended many generations. What do you credit the success to?

Jon: We played a lot of live shows. Shit, we toured the States a lot. We built a big following and it just kept growing. Such demand came around that we were pushed into the mainstream by the kids. Them wanting to hear our shit on the radio, and the more they asked for it, the more radio stations played it. So, it's the kids. But the f***ed up thing is, when you get that mainstream success and attention and shit, they start bagging on you for it. And why? It's not really our fault.

GR: It's funny too...the radio play, that is. Your music really isn't radio friendly. And I don't say that to say it doesn't deserve to be on the air waves, but that nothing like it was being played at the time.

Jon: It's crazy. I never, ever thought this would happen, it's pretty cool though.

GR: Pretty cool? Damn, it's hella cool! So, you've been playing the Dreamcast for awhile now. What games interest you?

Jon: Jet Grind Radio is pretty cool. I really like the concept of tagging and the visuals are really cool.

GR: Any other game you like or are looking forward to?

Jon: I really want to see Quake III. Blowing mother f***ers up, collecting big f***n' guns and runnin' for your life. That shit gets me goin'.

GR: When did you get your Dreamcast?

Jon: We did a show in Oakland, California and Sega was one of the sponsors. They gave us a system and the games that were out at that time. It was right around the same time it was released in stores here.

GR: What game do you put in constant rotation?

Jon: When I first got it? Probably Ready 2 Rumble. That shit is pretty funny and it plays really good too. I really like the different characters, like Afro Thunder. It's more arcade-like, but that's what makes it fun for me. Just jump in and go.

GR: Well shit, man. Let's stop with work. Thanks again for giving us your impressions on the games and the PS2 and Dreamcast. You have no idea how much we appreciate your time.

Jon: Nah. Thank you. This was really cool. Should we play some games?

GR: Absolutely!

And the night went on. Just kickin' back, relaxing and playing a few games.

SOUNDTRACK REVIEWS

Power Stone Original Soundtrack
Label: Mars Colony Music
Artist: Capcom/Tetsuya Shibata (composer)

B+

I confess that I sort of overlooked Power Stone when it came out for Dreamcast, so I really didn't experience much of the game or its music. Thus, when I popped in the soundtrack and hit play, I had no idea what I was in for. Amazingly, I found myself listening to an incredible treat. Catchy, varied, and overflowing with sampled instrumentation, this is one of the best soundtracks that Capcom has done in years.

Maybe the best part of this CD is its great diversity. While continuously orchestral, rich and booming, the music runs across a great array of sound, from heroic to haunting, and ethnic styles. Appropriately representing the global locales that the game takes place in, there are Asian-sounding tracks, with shakuhachi flutes and wood percussion, mystical Middle East tunes, and a fantastically catchy Latin beat. The one thing they all held in common was that after hearing each one, I wanted to listen to it again and again, especially the Mutsu, Tong-An, and Dullstown Stage tracks. And it's not just the fighting stage tunes that sound great—even the ending themes and short fanfare songs reek of quality. I just wish they hadn't wasted space putting in those unnecessary voice and sound effect tracks and had extended the other tracks instead.

That annoyance aside, the rest of this CD made me want to go out and play the game, which says a lot about the quality of a soundtrack; more specifically, it says that this CD is pure game music bliss. If you took a pass on the Power Stone game, do yourself a favor and don't do the same with the soundtrack. -C.Hoffman

Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Original Soundtrack
Label: Mars Colony Music
Artist: Capcom/Hideki Okugawa (composer)

C+

Much like the game on which it's based, the soundtrack for Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike is an all-around solid effort, but it really isn't up to par with the best that Capcom can do. The music for 3rd Strike is nothing if not unique, the sounds being a funked-up mix, predominantly consisting of techno and hip-hop, with some ethnic flavorings tossed in to provide a different spice for each track (Asian sounds for Yun and Yang's Hong Kong stage, tribal beats for leggy Elena's Africa level, etc.).

Fans of techno will instantly get into the groove, as the music doesn't even sound like a video game soundtrack: it could easily pass for house music at a club or a rave, and the fast, danceable music would jam at a party. The tracks are numerous and lengthy (OK, so the fanfare tracks, like the game-over tune, are rather short and pointless), but they all sort of have a similar, repetitive sound, and none of them particularly stand-out. Shortened tracks and more of them would have made for a much better experience, as the game on which the soundtrack is based offered three mixes of each BGM, but this soundtrack only scratches the surface with one mix of each. And Mars Colony, please take note: when you include a voice and sound effects collection, all it does is inspire me to turn off the CD before those tracks hit. Game music fans, if you want some happenin' techno for your next gettogether, go ahead and get this right away. For me, it's just a bit too repetitive and uninspired, despite its uniqueness, to put in my listening collection. -C. Hoffman

THE CELL

REVIEW

NEW LINE HOME VIDEO
DVD • 107 MIN
RATED R
REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO

Tarsem Singh's *The Cell* is visually extraordinary but probably the flattest piece of scripting you'll likely see with this sort of budget. Trying its best to have the gross-out appeal of *Seven*, with FBI investigations and a multi-action editing approach reminiscent of *Silence of the Lambs*, *The Cell* fails at being the suspense thriller champion it wants to be, but succeeds in being the first in a new wave of optically ambitious ways to view films as we know them. Playing with camera angles, altered time, colors, disfigured imagery, and many of the approaches only the most adventurous photographers would dare attempt, *The Cell*, despite its story, is actually an homage to art — and specifically the art of Salvador Dahli — more than any coherent story. With lackluster acting by Vince Vaughn and Jennifer Lopez, who cares about the plot anyway? It's the mind-trip we're after, and no matter how you felt about the theatrical release, *The Cell* on DVD, with its director commentary, revealing deleted scenes, and commentary on the look of the film (which is easily the movie's biggest draw) is an immediate purchase for any aspiring filmmaker. Tarsem Singh reveals his passion on filmmaking, talks a bit on his appreciation of David Cronnenberg, David Lynch, and the impact of the deleted scenes, and if you're a cinematographer at heart, you're probably already pre-ordering this stunning DVD as I type this. For the rest of us? You can pause on Jennifer Lopez's... Get the DVD.

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THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

•[illegible] *Bebop Movie*, and according to producer Masahiko Minami, expect the movie and soundtrack to be heavily infused with some Israeli flavor. Says Minami, "The culture impressed me and is going to have a great influence on the characters and the story of the film."

•Rick Berman says to expect interesting things to happen to Data in the new *Star Trek* movie, tentatively titled *Star Trek X* for a 2002 release. Those nasty Romulans will be making their big comeback led by a baddie so great, according to screenwriter John Logan, that he'll be the "greatest since Khan blew himself up."

•*Unbreakable*: The Trilogy? It's possible according to Bruce Willis in a slip [illegible] tossed around ideas for a trilogy. Can you say, "Greatest Superhero Movies Ever Made?"

•Jada Pinkett-Smith joins the growing *The Matrix 2* cast according to a recent interview with her on Oprah Winfrey. Gamers' Republic has already reported that Jet Li is also part of this increasingly impressive cast.

•WWF's Chyna or Famke Janssen? According to online rumors, both femme fatales are in the running for a female Terminator in the upcoming John McTiernan (*Die Hard 1* & *3*) helmed *Terminator 3* with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

•David Hayter's (*X-Men*) *Incredible Hulk* screenplay is a go, and will focus on the origin of the jade Giant according to an upcoming issue of Entertainment Weekly.

CINEMATRIX DVD REVIEWS

	DAVE HALVERSON	MIKE HOBBS	BRADY FIECHTER	SHOLA AKINNUSO	
TITAN AE fox home ent.	A-	B	B+	C	B
GLADIATOR dreamworks	A	B+	A-	A+	A-
TOY STORY 2 disney dvd	A-	A	A	A+	A
SHANGHAI NOON touchstone	B+	B	B	B+	B
M:I-2 paramount	C+	C-	C-	D-	C-
X-MEN fox home ent.	B-	B-	C+	B	B-

DVD Release Matrix: *[illegible] Dead Man, House of Games, Princess Mononoke, Road Trip (rated and unrated), Saving Grace, Seven (Platinum Series), Sid & Nancy, Small Time Crooks, Virgin Suicides [illegible] The Art of War, Courage Under Fire, The Exorcist: The Version You've Never Seen, Godzilla 2000, Predator (DTS), The Siege (DTS) [illegible] Hollow Man, Nosferatu, The Way of The Gun*

FALLOUT

Should you wish to put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard), please write to: Fallout, Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 215, Westlake Village, CA 91361 USA (editorial@gamersrepublic.com).

Dear GR,

I am 15, male and living in Australia. And although I am not an 'aussie' I still care when Australia is not catered to. This happens a lot with video games in particular as we get all the TV shows, movies, etc. that you get but, and you may not notice this, we are largely forgotten in the game world. If you do some research you would find out how many games (mostly RPGs) we miss out on, how we are the last for everything, we pay almost double for your games (thanx to the falling Australian dollar) and that we get inferior games to yours due to programmers being too lazy to port the games properly to PAL, and get games with borders and slower frame rates. I could go on all day! I thought this would go away with the next gen consoles but we got the Dreamcast 2 months after you guys did and it only had 3 titles on release and no VMUs or other peripherals. We also received few and poor commercials for it. So I said screw this I'll wait for the PS2, but then I get backstabbed again. The price for a PS2 here is $750AUS which is bout $390US. What's worse is the NTSC/PAL problems still remain for some games such as Ridge Racer 5 and TTT, at least the Dreamcast fixed this. At the time I wrote this (23rd, Nov 2000) with 7days left till our PS2 launch I have seen NO TV ads of any sort, bear in mind that they may come out 5 minutes after I write this but shouldn't they do them like 11/2 weeks before?? 20 years ago America and Europe were making games for the Atari 2600 while Australians were too busy making the boomerang! But now things are looking better cause more developers are starting up here but it's taking too long. I guess I'll have to wait and see if the Xbox or Gamecube will correct this. I would like to see your thoughts on the subject.

-Jason

Jason,

So, the Aussies have bare breasted beauties on the beach, Fosters running out of spickets, can make young girls fly, put on the best Olympics the world has ever seen... but they don't have a strong video game industry? Crikey! Seriously though, Australia is a BIG place to have such a nonsensical problem. I'm amazed that an opportunity so lucrative has gone unnoticed. Untapped markets such as yours simply no longer exist. We'll take it farther than this shameful reply and make sure to forward your concerns to some folks with the means to solve your problem. Just promise me, if we get you lot fixed up, you gotta' get me an hour or so with Kylie Minogue after a couple of those oil-can sized brewskies.

Dear GR,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for providing what I feel is the best electronic gaming journalism available. But then again you've been doing that for quite some time now (i.e. that 'other' gaming magazine). I'm just curious why it seems that in the industry things seem so damn political. I mean it's as if all of the video game companies are like political parties and consumers are so ready to join the Sony party or promote the Nintendo campaign and if I own this system then your system is crap. I was an employee of Funco, Inc. for nearly five years and saw so much of this behavior it was pathetic. Do people really just want to have one system and no other choices available? Seems kinda wacky to me, but then I like the first four Final Fantasy games, Shining Force, EWJ and Gunstar Heroes more than a lot of the games I've seen recently. It just seems like gamers are shooting themselves in the foot when they latch onto that "tunnel vision" system mentality. It also seems like the newer breed of gamers is, well...wimpy. I've seen numerous reviews panning the new Ecco the Dolphin game. This, to me, is absolutely criminal, and stop me if I'm wrong here, but I thought that games were designed to be challenging. It seems like "If it's got great graphics, then it must be great...what, no, I don't want to have to figure anything out, duhhh." Well, anyway, if you've actually read this far, thanks and major domo for making GR a monthly event to look forward to. May the road rise up to meet you.

-Chris

Chris,

You sound like us, spouting off about the state of much of gaming. I mean, so what if a certain manufacturer sells more systems? Great, congratulations. That doesn't mean their software line-up or hardware is any better. Today's consumers would buy a turd in a box if the TV said it was all the rage. The problem is that much of our industry has become more about marketing and licensing than it is about making great games. The same thing has happened to music and cinema. In the old days they put a film in the can when it was ready, but nowadays, they're more interested in hitting a date than they are in the final cut. And how about music? It seems anyone can be famous, regardless of whether or not they have any talent. Again, if you package it right and market it correctly America will stand in line to buy it and, convince themselves that it's actually good. We have always feared the day when gaming would suffer this precarious fate but knew it was inevitable. Now that it's here we're only able to deal with it because, like cinema, and like music, there are those developers and publishers who still believe in content. The best thing to do is support them and be thankful they're not planning the next Grinch sequel. And keep playing those classics. I ran through Gunstar again last week and it was as sweet as ever. How about Castlevania IV and SotN, or Yoshi's Island (SNES)? So many games actually get better with age. In regards to the latest echelon of gamers, it drives us crazy when games like Moto GP and Ecco get scoffed at. There is no reason to say a bad word about either unless you're shit at games, plain and simple.

Dear GR,

So I have this PS2 and I'm wondering.. Where's the groundbreaking gameplay and graphics that are supposed to have Sega screaming? They should be cheering!

-A fan

Fan,

We feel your pain, some of the games don't measure up, but you must realize, the PS2's tricky, so the best is yet to come. It does have insane capabilities. In the meantime try SSX, Smuggler's Run, Time Splitters, Moto GP or RRV. They all show off the system's strengths. And...Klonoa 2's coming!

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▸ *DINOSAUR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 63*

fresh dimension to the proceedings. Rather than choosing the path of least resistance, players are urged to explore and, if possible, exterminate as many enemies as possible, and the areas are quite large. The diverse missions offer up clever new puzzles at every turn, as well as a sufficient graphic punch with effects like fire, fog, and water taking on highly realistic properties. The big, prehistoric-sized fly in the ointment (besides the constant streaming that makes your Dreamcast sound like a crazed wind-up toy) is, unfortunately, the frame rate, which chugs along like a silent movie much of the time.

Overall, Dinosaur delivers where it needs to succeed as a passable companion piece to the film. It's full of adventurous gameplay, beautiful film segments and fitting classical music. It's a shame they couldn't lock it down at 30-fps. **GR**

▸ *BANJO TOOIE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 76*

about having a certain ability, over the crazy timing stints and perilous jumping that I loved so much about Banjo-Kazooie. It's called legwork, and although it's done oh-so perfectly, it's just not for me. On the other hand, discovery is wonderful and as such, this is a fantastic game for anyone who digs the way Rare does it. The game is also chock full of mini-games. Blah.

So if you're looking for the next Jet Force Gemini (and I so am, I can't believe they cancelled Dinosaur Planet) or trademark Rare platformer, Banjo-Tooie ain't it. But If you're like me and the millions who must play every Rare game regardless, you'll be glad to know that they have made Banjo-Tooie a lot easier and more accessible than they did DK 64. They've set warp pads everywhere, so backtracking is now a lot quicker and easier, and the new bosses, while easier, are imaginative, technically astounding and (I know, it's hard to fathom how they can keep making them better) actually better. Another cool new innovation is the zooming feature, which is always at your disposal. Everyone knows how dialed-in Rare has the zoom and they've exploited it perfectly in Banjo-Tooie. You can examine anything within your line of sight down to the smallest detail from great distances. Of course, the writing is light and witty, with an emphasis on pop-culture and British humor, the music is fun and frolicky, and every last aspect of the gameplay from the animation to the effects and control are pure Rare perfection. As puzzle-action games go, this is the Rolls Royce of the category.

So now with Banjo completing his run on the 64, one last big hoorah awaits, and it could be Rare's greatest game ever, Conker's Bad Fur Day. After the cancellation of Dinosaur Planet, I'd be lying if I said I wasn't a little paranoid about a game with a peeing squirrel in it, but I'm confident that Nintendo won't let five years of development go down the tubes. Beyond that lies the Gamecube and hopefully a return to games like Jet Force Gemini for Rare. What I wouldn't give to see Vela on the Cube. Stranger things have happened. **GR**

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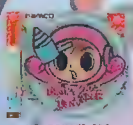
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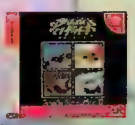
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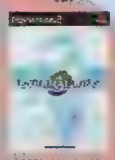
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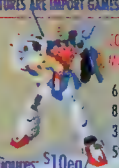

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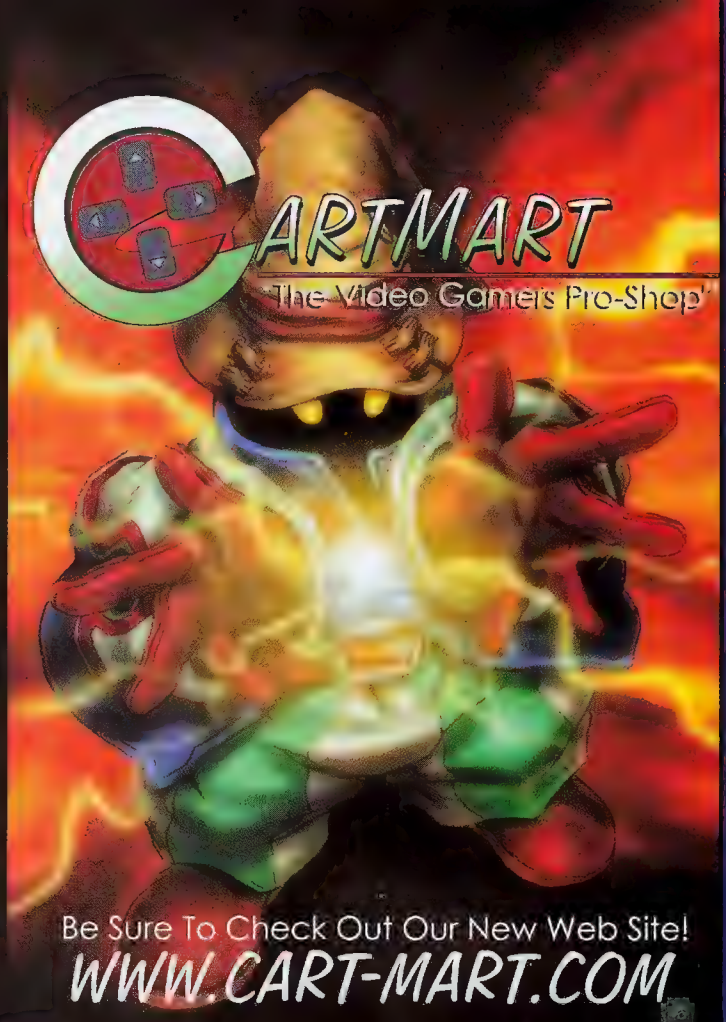

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February 2001

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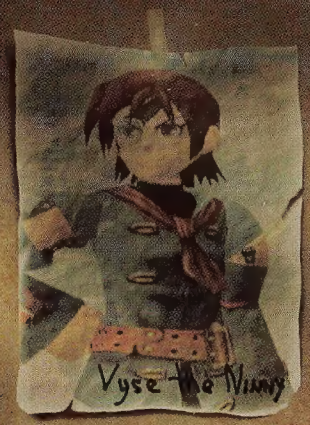

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